

VALERY ALEFF

ROUTINE

I

The end is not at the end; nor is it at the beginning and one might say it is somewhere in the middle and takes a walk in that middle and in the middle of itself and perhaps nowhere. Why should you take a walk within one yard, two yards, miles from anywhere or in the centre of London? You take your walks and go, go, go, and then you drop or stop or both, and someone says, 'Ashes to ashes' and you become ashes so as not to contradict your neighbour who wants to bury you.

Take yourself and carry your veins as far as the other world that must be waiting for you. Think of the other side and try to find it on your maps. You see the other side of a map and say to yourself, 'This is my side. I have to go there and I'm already late.' You are late and the other side is late too. But the other side is outside all times and you go towards this infinity and that eternity so as not to stay where you are. You stay and say, 'This is my mind. I've got this thought. I am not.' And you go towards yourself or a low tide. You are not yourself and that is why you can go.

You cannot and nothing can. You raise your hand and say what you can say. And there are three mice; and they are nice. Your weather is beautiful and their weathers are also beautiful, for Creation repeats this word, 'Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful.' You create this Creation and it repeats this word because you said to it, 'You should repeat this word. You're beautiful, you know.' Creation knows it is beautiful; it knows *you* are beautiful as well. Can you love your own beauty? You can and you fall in love with it. You are as beautiful as this flower, aren't you? You *are* as beautiful as this flower.

I am you or what or not. I find a landscape and say the world is beautiful. It is the worst of the worlds we know by heart, but it is beautiful; and we accept this beauty. If we do not accept any beauty, beauty will never accept us and we prefer to live instead of dying forever. We do not die, for we accept the unacceptable or the acceptable. We live and they say to us, 'Why do you live?' And we answer, 'We live and we say to you that life is here, inside us, outside, everywhere. There's life and nothing else inhabits the Earth.' And the Earth inhabits herself.

That will always be that because it is eternity. I know that, immortality and the soul which is inside, near the intestines. And we sing together, all of us. We do not know what we sing but we sing in a church and that is what counts. And we sing outside all churches and that counts too: whatever happens must count and we call it human history. We call it 'history' or 'mystery' and we know what is going on. And if we do not know this and that – and that, and that, and that – we know this and nothing is far; everything is on the table. A candle is there too. The candle.

And yet I know that will happen and my will cannot do anything except willing endlessly. What does it will? Life, death and whatever can happen in this life. It happens and nothing can stop it. And then this stops it, that stops it. It stops and we say, 'Such is life.' But life is neither such nor life. It is an object

you touch sometimes, when you feel like touching something. Or it touches you and you feel something or nothing. Nothing feels you and goes away. And I am what I have become and nothing becomes as well. All is well, all is well. And 'how' becomes 'what', and you are kind, very kind. I cannot live without you, without your mercy.

I do not and no has happened, will happen. The weather is outside, it is an outsider. I am not in the middle of the weather, of the sun. I am in the middle of you and you will ever happen; you cannot be otherwise. There is no otherwise and I plod, you plod through the moon. No sun, no stars, just the moon and I plod through it as if I had to plod through anything. All right, I plod; there is a plot. I am killing myself. And everything is as nice as the rest of the world. The rest, the rest, rest, rest, rest my spirit, my *spiritus sanctus*. Rest, you do not have to do anything.

Farewell is a word and you go with this word as far as you can. You can and cannot, and the story begins. It is still at the beginning. You go and snow falls, and you tell your winter's tale to those who will never listen to you unless they die. They do, they die, and they listen to you, to your winter's tale. And you say you fail so often you cannot live till tomorrow. You live till tomorrow and even two months later you write your tale. It is summertime and all colours talk to you about colours. And the summer talks to you about the spring.

It is what it is, in itself, outside, on the other side. There are three sides and many minds. They think and say what happens around them and even in other galaxies. These galaxies speak to the minds and say whatever comes to them. You also say what comes to you, and if nothing comes, you say something and that is what you need to know. You know this and also what you do not know because everything happens all the time and I know what happens. You always know what happens and sometimes I know what does not happen. Nothing happens.

This was said and done some time ago or in the years to come. Years come and everything is done once again. And I am on a beach, and Eisenstein is on the beach as well. There are no Einsteins nor Eisensteins; there are only relativities and quanta. They are both mechanic and artistic, and we know that even better than the Bohrs and Mores. All right, we do not know anything and anything knows what we have not known for ages. Is that happiness? Yes, it is, it was, and the Earth still turns instead of lying on some bed or other.

A garden where one might spend two lives. I am this one and I have three lives in the neighbourhood. I go towards these lives and pick them up. I wish to spend two of them in this garden. This is not Eden or anything of the sort, but I like this plant and even that branch. We hit it off and I spend one life in the shadow of this branch. And I spend three lives under three branches, four twigs, over five leaves. I am

tired. What can you do when you are tired? You think about life that is so long you cannot live it. You cannot die it either. You just think and say and say not.

A garden is suspended. It must be hanging somewhere and this anywhere is perhaps under my window or above it. You come out and smell the air, and neither the air nor the Earth smell and answer your questions. There are no more questions and Earths, and you call yourself the president of the universe or at least its prime minister. You call yourself this and no one answers. So no one calls you. You do not call yourself either. And this goes on: either and neither. And then they stop, but your watch goes on as if it could not stop. It cannot and it does not stop. I am watching my watch.

As usual so many routines that go from one corner to another. I count corners and their number is sometimes inferior to that of the routines. Cornered, corned and other associations come to one mind, two minds, and these minds follow their itineraries because everything follows its path. There are a few zigzags of luck, of bad luck, and you find your way because someone tells you, 'Tomorrow is over there' and it is not always beyond the horizon. The horizon is sometimes beyond the horizon or on this side of the Earth. I am also on this side, not beyond anything, anyone, myself. And it is right not to say it is wrong or long. It is short and not sweet.

'Not' is even better than 'yes', 'am' and 'is'. What *is* does not answer and there are only questions and a lot of ridicule that hangs over one. And one says to oneself, 'Life is a precious gift that one should not lose, even if one hates life and the afterlife.' One may hate all lives and their consequences, but one's life is so precious one should not despise it. And no argument, no pretext will ever justify this hatred which is natural and almost organic. One is born with this hatred and one dies with it, even if one is still alive. But one and everyone know that life is hateful and beautiful: we do not need our deathbeds to realise that. And no other life is as beautiful as this one, that one.

This step is already in the past or in the future. I return and am as eternal as any eternal recurrence. I return and they return: all eternal recurrences return and say 'yes' so many times you hear 'no' and a few four-letter words. They resound in your mind and you resound in their minds, and there are only minds everywhere; no bodies, no hearts. You return and say hello to yourself. So do I. And all sheds and beds are revisited once again, twice again. But thrice never happens; even the Holy Trinity does not happen. Of course there is God the Father and the Holy Spirit. And Jesus Christ is to be born in a few seconds. Christ, not a beast.

You are just what you are and will be if you persevere in your being or non-being. You choose this non-being and you become a being which is not and will not be under any circumstances. The circumstances are different now, but you are still a non-being or just a non. And beings are all around me as if they

wished to prove it is better to *be* than *not* to be a *non-being*. It is perhaps better to be *be* than *not* be. You think about the word 'be' and become a be: you are a bee and alive. You go from one landscape to another and breathe the air that is as fresh as this morning. You are not fresh; you are much worse than the air. Humans are not as transparent as air and water. Angels are even more impalpable, palpable.

Our times, their times. So many times are in the air and the air is in one time only. Only one time can breathe this air and there is no other air, whatever they say about airs. They take airs, analyse them and say that Air Number Two is different from Air Number Three, otherwise they would not give them different names. You take one number and compare it to another. Both are infinite. What can you do with them? You cannot pull them out of this infinity, but there is another infinity which is even bigger than the first one. What can you do with these infinities? You do not pick them up. You leave them where they are. They *are* – no doubt about that. You are not, but you are infinite. You are one of these infinities. Not *quite*. And this quite is essential.

The white object is different from the red one. You swallow the white one and they convey you to a hospital. You swallow the red one and they convey you to another hospital. That is the difference between these two objects. Are you different in another hospital? Yes, you are always different from what you are. Every minute brings in its bosom a new life, a new love, a new gene. Every new sun is different and every sun salutes you, for you are part of Creation and recreation. Your favourite recreations are golf and playing Scrabble. You play Scrabble and Creation. You create Light and Night. You create everything in God's image and this image is in front of you, whatever you do. You do nothing.

Love is your subject. You can do with it what you wish. You give it to someone and this someone says, 'I love you too.' But you think the quantity of love you get is not enough to satisfy your longings. You go to someone else and love turns up at once, for love is always there, inspired by sermons. Love is in your heart and your heart is in the middle of love and perhaps at the core of it. You love a woman, a man and also humanity: I cannot love a human being if I do not love humanity. So I love humanity and every human being. But I love this woman more than the rest of humanity, and I know I should love everyone and also whatever is beyond good and evil. And I do my best to love good people, good works and goods. I love them.

I do not accept what is done. What is done is often undone and I do not take notice of what is undone or overdone. And this minute or second is there as if it was eternal like eternity. It is eternity; so is eternity. And nothing is either done or undone. This twilight is not undone; nor will the morning fail one if this one or another one can live until this morning. And the morning is under way and every way is under way, otherwise there would be no ways. There are so many of them you prefer to fly away. And nothing

can stop this flight, not even a number of paralyses. They stop one flight but there is another flight in the wings, spreading its wings. It spreads them and I fly as swiftly as a Concorde or a Sputnik.

It is as if it was not anywhere, not even there. I see a few horizons and they answer my questions, even if I ask no questions. They answer, they answer whatever they can or cannot answer, and I listen to their talks and looks. All this is old and horizons walk along other horizons that hint at other worlds. And there are only hints everywhere, even when they murder you viciously. Just another hint and you lie on another hint, on Earth, on Persian carpets, and you hint at death and also at life. And life drops you a hint about how to live and you live around this hint, in its neighbourhood. And I am your life, whoever you are. I have not created you; you must have created yourself and your gods. But I am your life nonetheless, more than your life.

What is it, over there? An object, a woman, an old woman. She is so old you think she is an object you can put in your attic to divert your mice's attention from your body. But, whatever you do, these mice of yours gnaw on your bones and this woman is your mother. She also has bones and no one should leave her unattended in attics, in cellars and even on seashores. She is on our seashore and seems to enjoy the waves coming up to her feet as if they loved them. They may love everybody, for these waves – and any other waves, for that matter – do not go to church every Sunday. Instead, they caress your feet and even your body, if you lie near the sea. And I and why and waves do what they can to caress each other because love is a universal feeling and every universe is in love with universes and universals.

I become and unbecome, so to speak. Say, do, whatever you do, and so on. There is a lonely sail on the horizon and the horizon is as lonely as the sail. They put together their solitudes and become friends and even lovers. The sail is now as long as the horizon; and the latter will be as short as any old memory on condition that it lives long enough and becomes what it is: a lost memory. Not everything is lost, however. There are memories and sails that live either inside these memories or outside them. Let them live outside; let everybody live outside. This outside is much better than your body where there are too many bugs already. Whatever lives has a knack of invading your body and no anti-virus software will ever chase these intruders away. They are neither in the dark nor in the light; they are inside your mind. And your mind is inside itself.

No hands please. Give me neither your hand nor your mind. I can live without them forever, if necessary. And it is necessary to live forever, otherwise everything becomes as volatile as one's temper. What happens once may happen twice. All of a sudden you become violent and volatile, but they say you are a nice guy and whatever happens now will never happen again. It happens, it happens, and they no longer say anything. Their silence happens again and again; they are as silent as the stars. Listen to their silence, to their stars and dusts until nothing happens any more. You are alone and nothing happens

except that you happen every minute. Minute is no longer there; nor is every. Few and far between call me from afar, but they will calm down with the passing of the years. Calm down, for goodness sake. For my sake.

Too much; no little will ever tame this much. Much, much, no longer any suffering, however short and insignificant. It is insignificant, even this pain, the tooth I have forgotten for almost three months. The tooth is back and I know I have to get rid of it. She is having her wisdom teeth out. Now it is my turn. One wisdom tooth, three of them. I am not any wiser, nor any stupider. Take all of it, whatever I lodge in my body, my mouth. Let me be empty, otherwise I shall never become a Zen Buddhist or any other Buddhist. And the nirvana they speak about is probably in my mouth. But my teeth are just in the way of this nirvana. They block this nirvana's progress. But any nirvana is motionless, less; less than any nirvana.

It is clear now because you are awake. For years you have been sleeping in your passions and sins, but now you are wide-awake. And you see the world – or rather its absence – face to face. You see your absence and the world's absence at the same time, in the same place. You have no idea whether it is the right place or not. If it is the wrong one – or the wrong two, for there are many wrongs and sins – you just forget the whole thing and fall asleep once again. Again you sleep in your passions that lead you astray, and you go astray: you cannot do otherwise. Your passions are your will and you repudiate it of course. But something remains and you are still inside your passions; and your passions are outside. Others see them, catch them, violate your body and you are happy for once.

A being is perceived as not a being. There are beings and not a beings and not a non-beings. I look at these nots, nons and anti-beings. There are nuns and antis, all of them. I do not perceive anything because it is not worth my while – or any other's while – to perceive a no, a nor, a now. You perceive a now and think you live. But now is already in the past and no one lives in the past except Jesus Christ. He lives in the past, in the future and in between. But you should know that this 'in between' is not the present, whatever you may think about it in the present and in the past. You think and your thought is already in the future because any thought goes faster than light. Even Einstein was slower than any ordinary thought. So you think and go, fly towards the light and back again. You disintegrate and live forever.

One is everywhere and what do I care what is this one? I know it is not two; just one. It is absolutely one as if there could not be four or five. Three, of course. There are three goddesses and they ask you one question, 'Who do you choose?' You choose one, two goddesses, but if you do not choose the third one, there will be one war, two wars. So you choose all goddesses you know of and they come to your place, another place. There are many places and goddesses; and there are many divans, beds and myths. One myth speaks of one, another talks of ten. You multiply them and replenish the Earth inhabited by

goddesses, ones and threes. And trees. Yesterday I spent a few hours under a tree in my garden. This tree had me for three hours. It is my private church that coincides with the Church of England and the Episcopal Church. And I coincide with Adam Kadmon, Adam, Eve and Ava Garner.

Do you care? Nothing cares and you should not care either. No point in caring and faring and tearing anything up to throw it away. Whatever is thrown away comes back like Banquo and you look at many ghosts. They sit opposite you, looking at you, staring at your guests. These go out; those stay forever. You live with ghosts and you do not mind because you have already lost your mind at least ten times. Over ten hours. My mother, my father, my friends are sitting at my table. Have I killed them all? No, no. I am neither death nor life. I am a ghost of myself and sit at other ghosts' tables. We have always been staring at each other, ever since the Creation. And the Creation starts anew, every day, putting new life into you. Fresh air, fresh blood. Every Creation pumps my blood into storage tanks and assures me I am immortal.

A cycle is over. And this cycle is over that cycle. There are cycles: chaos is replaced by harmony and vice versa. And versa is replaced by vice. All this is the state of things where many things clearly state the limits of their liability. They are neither liable nor reliable and everything goes on, for it cannot go anywhere else, not even back. On, on, on, and this progress has nothing to do with pilgrims who go on getting rid of their diseases in Spain, in France and elsewhere. They lose their pains and live happily ever after. They recover their sight, their minds, and live on as if there was nothing back, down, sideways. Of course they also live it up, but up is inseparable from down. They go down instead of going to a stone, a valley, a fountain. They find their Blessed Virgin and are blessed. They are blessed.

So many etceteras. They begin an explanation and stop in the middle as if there were no ends or odds. They are right: no news, which does not mean they are good. Nothing is good, as far as they are concerned. I am no longer concerned. If my roof falls on my head or any other part of my body, I shall say nothing. I shall be dead. I shall be you, I shall be you. This rings a bell but I do not know what bell it is. It is probably not a bell at all, not a knell. I kneel down, just in case. And of course I pray because there are many cases which call for prayers or celebrations. I celebrate my prayer and my prayer sings a lot of praises and hymns. I cannot recall these hymns and their words, but my prayer recites them by heart. All is well, I am you, I am you. I am thou, I am now. And whoever is now is always and nevertheless. Nevertheless thou art mine.

It is not as obscure as whatever I have. I have a lot of have-nots and half notes. They play in my head and say life is short, as short as the utmost shortness. I have no idea what utmost means in this context. Perhaps it is shorter than most. Or bigger. Perhaps it is as big as the biggest universe. All is unclear and it is history, as they say. They say someone is about to assassinate a king and they are right. Are they

right? They are right for once. They are wrong eternally, but I listen to them nonetheless. What else could I do? I could listen to myself, to my guardian angel, to any angel within my reach. You just reach for an angel and it comes, flies to your rescue. And you are safe once again, for once. But once is often eternal. *Once* in a while. You repeat once, once, once, and once becomes a while, *the while*. From now on you will say the while. So be it.

You do it, you do. You are undone and it is undone too. So you do it again, for you have to live, struggle and muddle along. All is done again and you are happy. You are done once again and you are your own maker. You make yourself in your own image. And this image flatters you; and flattens you. You are just a photograph of yourself; or a reflection, a mirror of yourself. Once again you are in the making, for it is the only way to survive. You become what you are and lose your identity. Your cells are destroyed by pollution and disillusion. But your bells go on tolling for you. They cannot toll for anyone else: they are your bells, yours, yours. They are also destroyed by pollution and perversion. You are still alive but not kicking, not kicking. You are alive and that is what counts. You are free from all becoming and destroying. You are neither attached nor detached. You are nowhere.

A question, an answer. There are questions that answer a lot of answers. Yet the number of answers is far inferior to that of questions. I know where but know not when and how. I know that any how is a way and you go this way, for there is no other way, at least for the moment. And no one can assure anyone there are many ways elsewhere, otherwise and on the moon. There are no ways, a lot of whys and nice, nice, nice. You are stranded on a beach as if you were a wreck, a ship or both. You are all. As usual you are the universe and the universe is you. And whatever is up is also down, below, in someone's belly. And also in everyone's legs. And private parts remain private. You grab a towel to cover your private parts and the universe.

It is not, not at all. It is out, away. The same dream, my eternal recurrence. I do not know you. Why do you occur and recur? A cat in my garden, looking at me, waiting for a morsel of fish. No fish, no morsels. You can eat my body, if you wish. You do not wish to eat my body. Nor do *I* wish to eat it. I wish it could vanish into something thin or thick; or spick and span. It stays where it is, even when it moves. Moving, talking. What is the matter with my body and soul? Why don't they go to the gods? The gods are sure to eat them, putting an end to their suffering. They will endure until about 2020, my body and soul. Let them endure and they will say hello to a few generations to come. Going, going. Worstward Ho! Let us endure all this together unless there is nothing to endure.

What if I don't stand up to go down? I am unborn, *utterly* unborn. Not just half-born, like many girls about whom you read in psychoanalytical books. I go through Limbo, arms akimbo. What else does one need to spend a lot of time near the Earth? I know what it is and how I should deal with it unless it

undergoes a metamorphosis. If it does not undergo anything, I shall go as if I could go somewhere. No time to waste, no wastes. No wastelands, no waste minds. All my minds are on top form and pull out all the stops. Then they do not pull anything out or down and I realise I have got only one mind, or just a half. And this half pulls everything in and I cannot go out. I am also in, perhaps inside myself, if there is anything I can call my or my-my-my. What have we here? Just a my.

If you look at each other, you may find you are on the same wavelength. The same life flows through you and even your bloodstreams are the same, although they are quite different. The same goes for your genes and geniuses. It is an illusion: life is not the same and it is mixed with non-lives that are different from deaths. They are non-lives and their terrors strike everywhere as if they were eternal, omnipotent. They are not zombies; they are mombies or dombeys. They are nondescript and descript, and we live through them because life is like that or like *niet*. Say whatever you like if you wish to save your life from nonsense, no-sense. It is non-life or yes-life. Yes, yes, yes. I am dying, Egypt. I am dying, Israel. I am dying, England, France and Poland. I am dying in a yes-no-man's-land.

Being a survivor. An awkward situation. Your cousins are dead; so are your friends. And you go on enjoying life. Not exactly, not exactly. But even if you do not enjoy it, you are inside it, not outside. You are not an outsider for once. What are you doing here? Enjoying life to the utmost? No. Enjoying nothing round the clock? Perhaps. 'Leave me in peace' is the only sentence you should utter to feel at home. Peace is the only home one can dream of. And one always dreams of homes. There is a house and also in the air one can feel at home. There are many houses and homes, and you feel at home everywhere, for you are a citizen of the world. You are also a citizen of the underworld. But you are still in the air, in the clouds of course. It is the aboveworld, as someone put it. Or the overworld. And you are an overman. And the Thames flows under you, above you and your song.

You enjoy a tiny piece of peace. This peace is neither universal nor personal. It is just peace and you think you are in its presence. It is better to hold peace in one's hands than have a number of wars on your hands. You have a war and this war has you in its hands and body. But you opt for peace and you vote for it. You have it and all wars disappear in the wings of our worldwide theatre. What can you do with this peace? You can look at it as long as you please. You look at it but your peace does not look at you. So you get angry and throw your peace away. Your peace leaves you in peace. And that is something one has to look for. One looks for peace, or rather for its absence, and finds what is called 'real peace'. You do not care whether it is real or unreal. It is peace and that what counts. And if you repeat this word several times, you have many peaces in your room.

Life is not monotonous, for there is no such thing as life. Many people say that and I say that too as if I was many people, the crowd or a tape recorder. I record whatever is said and done, but it is not life, even

if some lives are wonderful. You look at the sky and say to yourself it is beautiful, wonderful and only the Earth is more wonderful than the sky. Any cloud is wonderful; it may remind you of everything and everybody. And some people remind you of clouds – not only if they turn out to be turncoats. They float away whenever you wish to shake hands with them. Whither are they going? What if you overtake them once and for all? They are likely to float in and it is better to keep away from both people and clouds. It is too hot today, sultry, sulky. My mood is no match for this weather, for any weather, any whither. I shall always stay at home.

Play on, play on. What is music? It is our soul and we play upon our soul, even if we do not know how to use it for this purpose. We use our soul for prayers or join it to our heart. And then we can reign over the world for many years, provided we do not let them part. Sometimes our soul feels like hating our heart: there is such rivalry between them. Another prayer and everything calms down. Your body is calm and peaceful too. You sit down on the ground and realise your body does not want anything, anybody. Nor does it want to fall as it usually does when you walk: you are very tall and erect for your 78 years. Nothing is more awful than falls; even flights are less harmful. Are they? And Icarus? Who is this mythological character? And what about Daedalus and all this nonsense? Labyrinths, labyrinths. Mythologies do not help us live until tomorrow, let alone a month of Sundays.

What is the difference between art and life? Art is artificial of course; life is artificial too. And if it is artificial, it is not *real*. You have to drink the juice of life and also its wine. You drink all cups and fall ill. For once, there is no eternal recurrence: you do not recover. You are still ill and about to die. Of course you have already died many times and they call it eternal recurrence. They want you to die once more to make some interesting points in their speeches. They make a lot of points and you come back to life, for you believe in Jesus Christ and God believes in you, otherwise there would be no God. He believes in humans as much as they believe in the Immaculate Conception. (They cannot live without concepts, notions and comings.) You come, You come, and you do not go, come hell or high water. Hell will not come.

I wish you were here, not there. We talk to somebody, to many bodies, and they do not answer. Whatever happens is not over there or over here; it is perhaps nowhere. But it does happen: so many things, yins and yangs. They happen and you are happy. Ups and down, lefts and rights. As usual harmony reigns in the world. And the world reigns over other worlds and ideas. The chief thing is life. Another chief thing is love. And then the world comes to the fore, for there are no lives without this world; and no loves of course. In the beginning there were no loves. The world came with its Creator and all of a sudden a multitude of loves showed up. They replenished the Earth and the rest of our cosmos. There are only loves in our universe and even hates are loves in disguise. We kiss each other all the time and that is how time comes into existence: a number of kisses engender it. All is well, even if all does not end well.

No dialogues. Communications are everywhere, but we do not exchange anything. We just talk and bow to each other: not only the Japanese do that. We go to psychoanalysts and find out we are ill. We are well, we are ill. We set the wheels in motion; they are already in motion. We would like to stop one of them at least. How to stop these planets? They slowly rotate as they circle the Earth. And the Earth circles another earth or moon. And we all moon around the Earth as if the Earth was the moon and vice versa. You say, 'moon' and I answer 'Australia'. That is what they call communication; it is the only Internet we have *god*. You press a button and see 'New Zealand'. You go to New Zealand and see a button. You press it and see, 'Friendship', 'Love'. You love New Zealand, for this country is friendly. Then you press another button and find yourself or John. You press another button and embrace John's child.

Lights are not off. They are as eternal as the flutes that speak of magicians and sages. What do *these* speak of? About serenity, wisdom. You listen to music and think you understand whatever happens. This does happen and that does not. You hear all harmonies and melodies. There is only one harmony that is one melody. Again you come across the One about whom they talk in all sacred books. This One is sacred; so are you, otherwise there is no one. And if there is no no, there is probably one. You create all this and rest on your laurels. Sleep well on your laurels: your one will sleep with you. Why don't you sleep with your one? Some tests enable you to find out the sex of your baby before it is born. Why don't you have sex with your boy or girl, your absolute? Why not have a sort of absolute sex with your absolute? To know nothing but the truth. At last.

What is on in London? I used to go there and the Earth was round in those days. Now it is flat and I stay where I am: the end of the world is in my house or my garden. I look at a birch tree and think I would be delighted to live with such a woman. No one, no one. Only the garden and the Earth that is triangular. At least there is one triangle in the universe. The universe is also triangular and everything looks this way. There are no squares around us and black squares are triangles in disguise. There are black triangles, rose-tinted rectangles. There is a world which is not of this world, though inseparable from it. In that world there are rectangles; in ours we see triangles and squares. All these worlds belong in the land of no return. Of course they come back: they have nothing else to do. But the land to which they return is the land of no return. They come, they are back.

The spring is still there, in the neighbourhood where it should be, according to calculations. The summer is not far behind, beyond. What is beyond the summer, the autumn? The winter, says a schoolboy; and he is right because children and adults are always right, otherwise we would be wrong. Tell me all winters and their tales, if you can. The winter comes and someone is frozen to death. You drink twelve glasses of vodka and die on your way back. You wish to sleep in your bed and you sleep in someone's

snow. Of course you think of angels who deposit a lot of snow wherever you go. They guard you against life. They want you to sleep instead of living this life and leaving that one. You leave all these ones for once and die peacefully in the arms of Morpheus whose arms are big enough to shelter you from the rain.

To stop thinking. Not because of nirvanas and suffering. Passions stop; so do thoughts. They stop because they want to do it. They do not do anything; they have stopped. You say, 'Flowers,' thinking you might attain some state or other. A guru cuts one of your fingers off and your enlightenment comes at last. It does not. You have no fingers, but your enlightenment is still out of your reach. What can you reach if you have no fingers? You have no arms either: last night the guru cut off all your members saying you would be enlightened in a minute or two. You are neither enlightened nor endarkened. You are in a garden which is probably enlightened, judging from the sun and its beams. The sunbeams enlighten the garden, but you are still in the dark. You are not even in the dark; you are nowhere, not even in the garden. The garden is in the garden; you are nowhere. You are not even in yourself. You are in themselves.

Darkness prevails and there is nothing but darkness. This darkness is enlightened; that darkness is not. That darkness is not, yet it is. It is not called 'the dark ages'; it is not called anything at all. Why should you call it names? Your names describe the universe and whatever is dark. Describe everything, otherwise you will not know where to go and what to eat so as not to die of indigestion. Your intestines are in the underworld; your spirit is amidst the stars. I side with the stars and go away once more: I cannot fly. I go away and see my steppes where I shall bury myself for once. There will be a second time, a second burial and even a second desert. I think I prefer deserts to steppes. I do not think; I just feel darkness and my gift-wrapped body. I give it to you, my angels. You do not accept the gift. I unwrap my body and give it to myself. I accept the gift.

You are light and love, but I can live without you. I live and have another light, another piece of music. This piece is endless and I realise that as I listen to it. Yet no one can listen to it; one can only *know* about it. I know and listen; nothing happens, nothing at all. Why should anything happen? No nirvanas, no immobility. This just does not happen. The world or whatever it is does not happen, for it cannot happen. What *can* it do? A piece of music? No. Nothing aspires to this condition. Music is alone and no one knows anything about it. Even angels do not know anything. They have to save our souls and music is not their pigeon. Come to us. Settle down in our chests of drawers. What can you say? The first few leaves in the gutter announce the beginning of autumn. What about you? Another birth? Another death? Another dearth?

Nothing is outside. They always say something like that. They know everything and think that everything is inside. You have your passions and also their absence; you also have the outside world. You do not have anything, not even your passions, desires and numerous angsts. You have nothing at all, not even despair. You are not empty, but you have nothing at all. You are stark naked and there is nothing inside your naked soul. You hate climbing ladders so you do not climb them. You do not climb anything. Your naked soul stays on the surface of the Earth. Sometimes it jumps up as if to show it can jump. It can jump up and down. It jumps down too – on another surface of another earth. On another earth it finds a leaf and covers itself. But not every earth has leaves and very often your souls and bodies remain uncovered, undiscovered. They jump from one surface to another. There is a surface elsewhere.

You are not there nor anywhere. I am not looking for you, for I am not used to looking for anyone. You are in your holes; you are moles. So am I. Why look for anything? Don't we have our little melody? This melody is very little, but it can be repeated at will. We repeat this melody, even if we do not always sing or play it. We just repeat it – mentally perhaps. Or corporally; it depends. It resounds, it resounds. What is yours? What is not? This melody is yours, but it is also elsewhere. It is yours, even if someone else hears it, listens to its zigzags. No, there are no zigzags in this melody, inside it. There is only a straight line. I do not know where it leads. I do not even know whether it leads anywhere. I know neither straight lines nor zigzags. I know one note and have no wish to sing it. I let it sing.

It is not what I have hoped for, ever since I began to understand despair and hope. This is probably a brick wall or another kind of wall. I touch it and the wall goes away. I touch the sky and the nearby lake. What is within my reach? My reach, only my reach. The rest is above the sky. I can touch the sky but not the beyond. And there are so many stars beyond the sky. There are no stars; there are only skies. They look at you and say you are afraid of them, of yourself and of this minute. This minute goes; one sky goes too. What remains is another sky, but there are no minutes either in your garden or in your body. There are only seconds. You caress them. What else could you do? You caress seconds, inches, ants, aunts. You caress the grass and walk away as if there was no grass, no grasshoppers. Walk away until there is no away.

Everything falls into place. I am neither sad nor mad. And soon all the cocks will start to crow to make an announcement or something else. There is always anything else. You do not know what you will always deal with: anything, else, totality. You deal with totality and are total. Something comes and takes one part of your totality. You are no longer total and you have no idea who you are, for you go through another identity crisis. You go through it and come out on the other side. You know who you are; you also know who your brothers, sisters and mothers are. They recognise you and you say 'hello' to everybody, even to your distant cousins. Then you go through another identity crisis and no one pats

you on the shoulder as if you had no shoulders. You have none and only through his shoulders can a man recognise a man.

Another year ahead; another year behind. There are two years on the right-hand side. You decide what years you take and give me what is left behind, ahead or anywhere. You always say 'anywhere' and that is the only way to get somewhere. The Buddha did that and others should follow his example, even if one does not have as many arms as he had. His arms pointed in all directions, which means there are various options open to someone who is willing to work hard. And if you are not willing to work at all, there are various options in your room, provided you read a few sutras every morning. If you are not one of the Buddhas, nothing is open unless you are Jesus Christ. If you are, the heavens open up. You stare up at the heavens trying to see a comet, Jesus Christ and the Buddha. You see yourself or just self.

You do not see yourself. You buy mirrors and see only mirrors. And this is the only truth you can see: mirrors, mirrors, mirrors. You see a reflection of this truth and then see it face to face. You see the face of the truth and recognise it. This is your mother's face, your father's. But your brother is somewhere else. You have neither brothers nor sisters and the mirror you are holding is just a mirror, nothing else. You do not even hold yourself; you hold only splinters and winters. Not even their tales. There are only winters and they talk to you about snow, not about its tale. They say to you that any snow is just the snow you see in a picture. You see the snow and realise you cannot walk along its space. You walk along a snow-time.

No mood, in no mood. Then the right mood comes at last. You are in the mood for talking to your neighbours. You talk to them for a while and the mood disappears. You talk to no one for an hour and another mood comes. You keep silent and the mood keeps you company. Your moods do not leave you alone. They are *your* moods and you have nothing apart from them. Of course you have nothing, but this is also a mood to some extent. You repeat the word 'nothing' and it becomes a mood, a sort of desperation. There is nothing and this nothing is not nirvana. You are not saved; you are not dead. There are moods inside you and these moods talk to you about yourself and even others. And other moods talk to you about either, neither, wiser. You are wiser and neither.

Talk to nothing. Do not talk to this wall, to ghosts. They do not listen to you because you are not a ghost, not yet. Not yet. You are probably yet, but not a ghost. A number of ghosts play around you as if you were a playground. Of course you are; you are the playground of your emotions. But your emotions are not ghosts. They are tangible; they devour you. What is left hardly amounts to what is called a creature. It is a mixture of many rests and now you can talk to ghosts: they will hear you. They listen to you and you say to them you are not dead yet. They say you are already dead. They do not say you have always died. Why don't they? You were alive and happy only two years ago. Now you are dead. What a pity.

At least you have no fear of death. From now on you will speak neither of life nor death, nor resurrection. You will speak of ghosts and they will speak of you, if they feel like it.

The spring breeze is gently rising over you. In your turn you rise and find yourself above the spring breeze. Then this breeze or whatever it is rises once again and you find yourself under it. You are either above or under, but at last you are both: above and under. You are under yourself, above all others. You are also in the middle, and then you become yourself at last. But at last does not last; once again you are below everything. Even your grave is above you. Are you comfortable under your grave? You are trying to climb as far as your grave even if you reach it ten years afterwards. In the end, you reach it again one year later. But your grave is not comfortable and you continue to climb. You climb your own mountain and find yourself on another mountain, amidst the stars. Inside a star.

If you answer one question, you answer all of them. If they ask you what time it is, you consult your watch and give an answer. You look at your watch and resolve all problems and universes. One answer is enough and you can die in peace except that you go on living and dying. Why ask questions? You realise your nature; you are free from the bonds of life and death. There are no bonds and if there are some, you are free from them. You are free from your birth and your mother, let alone your father. You do not fly but you are free. You were not born; you are as eternal as anything. You show your passport and they look at the date of your birth; and also at the date of your death.

What? Where? How? It is now, and that answers all questions. What is in front of you? And also behind? Where is here or there? You do not have to look around you. You are in the middle of this where or any other where. You come and play with dolls; they play with you. That is the answer you are looking for. You are not looking for an answer. A doll, a doll. You put it in your pocket. You take it out and put it in another pocket. You do not have enough pockets for your dolls, for your life. Yet you put your life in a pocket that is large enough for your life and even your afterlives, your loves. You put your life in a small pocket. And this pocket grows bigger and bigger.

To the north of the river; to the south of the lake. Of course you know what rivers you are speaking of, but the rivers flow upwards and vanish in the sky. To the west of the rivers. You go west, east and reach the sky where many rivers are waiting for you. What about fish? You are in your own company and the heavens shine in your eyes. What else do you need? Another heaven, another sun. They also shine and you realise you are not alone. You go through yourself and they shine in your heart, your stomach. Every star shines in your body, inside it. You must be happy because light means happiness in your religion; and other religions as well. Light is life and when you try to ascertain its whereabouts, you say that light is everywhere. To the north of light; to the south of life.

I am not attached to anything. If I think of anything, I let it go, and it goes away; I no longer think of it. The same goes for objects. I pick one of them up and drop it at once. I break whatever I take so as not to attach too much importance to it or anything else. If you break one thing, you break the whole world. In a broken world, you are not attached to anything. Why should you fall in love with splinters? With spinsters? No attachments, no passions. If you pick up a spinster, you drop her at once; she lies at your feet as long as you let her remain where her body can be found. There are many pieces around *your* body; many broken vases. You are not attached to them. Even if your enemies find a rope and do their best to attach you to one of these former vases, they will fail. You are unattachable.

What is the meaning of Emptiness? It is empty and has no meaning, otherwise it would not be empty. It is as empty as an empty bottle: I drank a lot of wine last night. Shall I take the empty bottles for recycling? Yes. Emptiness will be recycled once and for all. You recycle Emptiness and it outlives you and itself, bent on purifying the world. It is purified and nirvanas reign to the detriment of fulnesses. I am not happy. I am not and I can feel it. And my absence has nothing to do with nirvanas. I am just not there, near this door; far from it. I am not beside that wall and yet that wall is over there. Why does the wall exist? I am not, I am not. Could you take me for recycling? Another cycle, another eternal recurrence. I wish I could be recycled or cycled. Whatever you do with my body proves that I am, even if I do not think. I do not think.

What is the meaning of a meaning? It means nothing of course. And of course means nothing either. What do you mean? I mean nothing. Let us have a glass of milk, of wine, of moonshine. We have two glasses, three glasses, and everything grows meaningful. Everything grows and even a few trees in your garden look less meaningful than anything. I shake someone's hand and this hand grows. It covers my entire body, picks it up and takes it somewhere. As I fly through rooms and palaces I realise I am in the hands of God. Then I realise I am imprisoned and poisoned by a man or Man. I begin to count my prisons, my convictions – anything. I count anything and my multiplication table grows as I count it or dinner tables. I count – that is what counts. This counts; that counts as well. And nothing ends.

What is the meaning of ends? They do not end and that is perhaps their meaning. Something will always end, whatever you do. So will another thing, even if you do not do anything. You say it is a beginning, but this beginning ends before you can say anything. You say nothing and beginnings end, for they do not depend on your words. They depend only on their ends and only suffering remains, as the Buddha says. You remove your suffering and also that of the world, and a big end appears in front of you. You take this end and put it at the end of the road. You wonder if this road has any beginning. It has only the end you put at the end of it. You sit at this end and Paradise opens its gates. You go through these gates and sit down on a log. This is an end-log, not an endgame: you still have a few pawns in your pocket. And you are a king and a queen.

This is the abode where I am delighted to live. I am not delighted and do not want to live, but the abode is beautiful and called Emptiness, I suppose. It is not called anything and it is not an abode. It is just a house, a room. I can stay here as long as I am allowed to stay anywhere. I am allowed to stay over there; I stay over here. I am not allowed to stay and disappear. I am not allowed to listen to myself, to whatever I say to myself. There are noises and I listen to them. I cannot say anything, anyway; I am just another noise and I walk in the streets. I make a lot of noise: my shoes are noisy. I scream from time to time; I am allowed to scream. I am also allowed to keep silent. I keep silent and listen to my silence as long as it lasts. It lasts and I hear many symphonies inside this silence, many cantatas. This silence sings a cantata of my divinity. I am learning its melody, not its words.

I have no self-control. I control neither myself nor insects, let alone humans and plants. Nor do they control my life. It goes and comes. What is another life? It is another and I have no idea what another means. There are only these and nothing else. You open a door and see these, not even those. You see a shadow and there are bugs inside this shadow. There are bugs inside those shadows as well; and also outside them. No melodies, no harmonies. Just a path and you do not even have to walk along it: this path walks along your body. You feel the path and everything else. The path does not lead upwards; it leads towards a hollow that is not the sky. You stay in this hollow and say to yourself it is the sky, the heavens. It is a haven from the noise and bustle of cities. It also provides safe havens for the refugees. What refugees? You are not; they are. You are together in this hollow; and the hollow is in your eyes.

Treaties, stories, dogmas. You follow them and it pays off. You are no exception to the rule that rules over you and others. What else? I am sitting under a birch tree and that comes as a surprise. Why am I sitting? I am always lying or walking on the outskirts of cities. Another piece of news. I am this piece, but I am not the news. I am as old as the moon. What time does the moon rise and set? I rise at 5 p.m. and set at 5 p.m. Let me talk to angels. I hope they are willing to talk to anyone, provided this one believes in angels. I believe in them, in their clothes and wings: they are so colourful. Where can one find clothes like that? And colours? I find many colours beyond my window and I wish I could put all of them on my body. I put a rainbow on it and become an angel. I am just a rainbow.

There is no easy solution to this problem, mystery. The mystery remains mysterious and the problem blocks the road and your progress. You no longer progress and you think you must progress, otherwise you will not survive and beget many children. You do both and the road is open again as if it could be open. There are doors at the end of this road; they are open too. Everything is open, down to the heavens. There are tables everywhere and God Himself serves you when you come because you are His servant. You smile; you have nothing else to do. And you have to do something, otherwise people might think you are dead. You are not; you are eternally alive and happy. You sit at many tables and drink a lot of

ambrosia. You are offered a few wings and you do not know where to put them. And a servant says you should clip these wings together. You follow his advice and do not fly.

To come back to the main subject. What is it? I know the subject but I do not know whether it is the main one or not. It is probably main. Everything is main; every nuance counts. This butterfly is mainly red and its colour counts because a red butterfly is different from a blue one. I see a green butterfly and say to myself that the beauty of nature has no limit. You can set a limit on it, but nature goes beyond this limit and you realise that its beauty is limitless. The beauty of its beauty is limitless too. And if you find a few limits along your path, you throw them away saying they do not belong in nature. They do not and only rubbish bins can recognise them. They do recognise them and I go back to the main subject, to the outside subject. I find it in a rubbish bin and dig it out. It is the main subject; it is more than a subject. Thousands of lives will be at stake if this subject is not treated. Thousands of lives are at stake. They are burnt at the stake. And the sun shines forever.

Negation is a means. You use this means and go towards noes, away from yeses. On your path you find two yeses and pick them up, just in case. There are a few cases on your path and you pick them up too. In your bag you have got five yeses, three cases and no noes. Yet you are supposed to go towards noes. You drop your bag and go towards negation. What does this negation mean? You have already discarded your passions and desires. There is nothing else to remove from your body and consciousness. What can you negate? Your self. You negate it, put it in another bag and throw it away. Now you have nothing but your negation. But you have no bags. You put your negation in your pocket and throw your pocket away. Your pocket is now in the dust, in the ashes.

You are Papa; she is Gena. You love each other and each other's names. I love you too because I know that love is nothing and everything is a flute, not even an enchanted flute. It is just a flute and you listen to it day and night. You have a nightmare, but the flute interferes with it and you have a sweet dream instead of a bitter nightmare. You do not have anything; there is a flute, not two flutes. This flute makes you happy as if anything could make you happy. You play yourself, even if you do not know how to play. I do know how to play this flute and any other instrument. As long as you play you live. You live as long as you play. You play for centuries and your melody is as endless as God. You do not pray; you just play.

I go and see the Truth everywhere. Even if I lie down and do not move for a week, I see the Truth. I see it on the ceiling and on my hands; the Truth is also in the week where I am living and dying and coming back to life. I rise from the dead as often as I wish, and the week helps me a lot. It becomes a month and two years, and I rise from the dead at the end of every month. Of course it would be better not to die, not to rise from the dead. But it is so pleasant to leave death behind and rise like Lazarus who is probably

Saint Lazare or another martyred saint; or not a saint at all. You lie down, die, rise up and go towards any horizon. This horizon recedes into the distance; another horizon comes and embraces you. You lord it over space; and time is at your beck and call. You grow weary of the Truth that grows weary of you. You both lie down, but you do not die.

Reality is limited and only fantasy is boundless – along with dreams. These are bounded by reality, but nothing is real and dreams prove the reality of this assertion. You assert something and immediately you see the bounds of your assertion. Your assertion is real and there is a limit to any reality, however real. And I think we ought to put a strict limit on the amount of reality we welcome into our lives. I like this dish and there is a limit to it. I cannot eat too much, for I am on a diet. This is a dish-limit. Reality is perhaps a dish, but we cannot enjoy it all the time because we are on a diet. If we neglect our diet, we shall not be saved. There is a reality-limit; there is an unreality-limit. You cannot be unreal round the clock. You are unreal, but there is a limit to your unreality. And there is a limit to this limit. And that limit is limitless.

Soothsayers, fortune-tellers. The salesman – the one we saw in our theatre – tried to sweet-talk you into buying a bigger car. You bought it, skidded on the ice and crashed into another car sold by the same salesman who does not seem to have died at the end of the play or just at the end. Not everyone dies at the end, you know. Evil empires survive all crashes and crushes. What we need is a so-called reality check. The recent failure of so many Internet businesses has provided a reality check for those who predicted huge profits. They also predicted eternal life. And your cancer provides a reality check for these medicine men and old wives' tales. You are spreading your precious blood onto the floor; the floor has already drunk a lot, growing stronger, stronger.

If you do not know what to do, you had better abstain from action and also non-action. You abstain from everything and your abstinence delights both gurus and gods. What should you abstain from? Alcohol, smoking and sex. You abstain from alcohol and your train of thought grows as clear as the waters where Narcissus saw his features. And it is as regular as Hercules' heartbeat. Hercules had a healthy body and his body was able to fight off any illness naturally without the use of medicine. He abstained from non-action and also from smoking. And what if your body is not healthy? What if it does not abstain either from sex or alcohol? What if you cannot see the void whenever it is necessary to see it? You see a naked body and replace it by the void. Then you see the void and replace it by another void. With the passing of the years you are bound to reach the Naked Void.

All things are empty, but there are things that are half-empty. They do their best to grow empty, but they keep something to themselves. And this something amounts to a third, a fourth and a half. They are half-real and there are even a few thirds in their midst. One does not know whether these thirds are real or

empty. Some say they are empty and real, for emptiness is real: you can see an empty bottle of wine. Others say they are just thirds and no one knows where they come from, to what unity they belong. Of course they belong to the One. But they can also belong to the Two or the Three. If they belong to the Four, they are fourths and you cannot fill them to the brim, for they are too small and often have no brim. So we say they are empty. Whatever is not a bottle of Burgundy is empty.

Take me to the top of the highest mountain where I shall rest forever or just for a few seconds. Sometimes a few seconds last longer than eternity. And eternity lasts much longer than a few seconds, however long and obstinate they are. These seconds *are* obstinate, for they wish to become eternity: every second aspires to the condition of eternity. Eternity rejects every second and they remain what they are – just seconds, nothing more. They might stretch across the horizon, but you realise they are seconds as you look at them at close range. It is better not to look at time at close range: you see seconds, minutes, not your immortality. You cannot see eternity if you look too closely at time. I do not look at it; nor do I listen to it. I listen to *Die Zauberflöte* instead. Or to the first and only movement of Mahler's *Tenth*.

A few moments of rest. One can rest even here, where no one can rest – in the middle of the street. In the middle of the street, on the top of the world. One can rest everywhere, even in seventh heaven. One can die here if one feels more comfortable in New Zealand than in any heaven. Anyway there are heavens even under one's feet, provided they feel the heavens, not the Earth. Why not feel the Earth? Why not walk to the end of it, to another end? There are so many ends to it. Whenever you are in love, you promise to take your beloved to the ends of the Earth, of the world, of the Milky Way. You go as far as the Milky Way and find its end. You are not dead; you are not even at the end of your tether. You explore all the ways your feet are lucky enough to find. There is only one way. It is not a way.

You should look after your life. If you do not, your life may avenge itself on its murderer. If you murder your life a little every day, it begins to murder you. Your life wounds you in the stomach and shortly afterwards dies from multiple stab wounds to the neck and upper body. Your wounds gape at you and vice versa. You bandage up some of them and walk around like a mummy. Usually mummies do not walk around, not even inside their pyramids. You are an exception to this rule. You walk around the city and passers-by take you for a ghost, one of the living dead. You are more dead than living, but people do not care about what you think and what you are. In their opinion, you are deadly alive and they murder you now and then because they think you might murder them and their children. They are wrong of course: you murder only yourself.

You are as transparent as the air. Your breath is a warm breeze. Now and then a cloud floats through you. In your turn you float through many clouds and they neither welcome you nor reject your temporary presence. You breathe yourself, your own breeze; you are never short of breath. Your breath is as big as

the atmosphere. A lot of factories release toxic gases into your whole body, not only into your lungs. To some extent your body is a toxic gas and you release yourself into the atmosphere. You relieve yourself too – not against trees, contrary to what other humans and dogs do on a regular basis. Your urine floats in the atmosphere and people call it a ‘rainy day’. They say they had heavy rain all day.

Humility is a sign of wisdom. You say that you do not know anything; nor do you feel anything except love. You allow the sentiment of love to bridge the gap between your ignorance and insensitivity. Your humility has nothing to do with modesty. Of course you know everything and if you are modest, you just say that you know *something*. Humility makes you lower your eyes in embarrassment whenever anyone looks at you. You are a lazy good-for-nothing and this is the only piece of information you can convey to the outside world. You know nothing else, and you feel only love – for your ignorance, among other things. And for your humility. The love you feel in your body is immeasurable and therefore you cannot help loving yourself with all your heart and body.

You say that all is wrong; so is everybody. There are no truths in heaven or Earth. Both are huge lies and black holes. They lie about everything and black holes say they are actually *green*. So they care about ecology and thanks to them we are warned of the ecological catastrophe to come. It does come because these are *black* holes, whatever they say. And they show their true colours when we find they are nothing but drops of oil. This oil comes to us from oceans, clouds and even from stars that also drop on our heads. Of course we no longer pay high petrol taxes; nor do we need motorcars and other means of transport. Round the clock we run around our cities and landscapes, and none of us ever runs out of petrol.

Your heart does not break, for no one takes the trouble to break it. They know you have got a heart, but they care neither about your heart nor your lungs. You may breathe as much as you please, provided you breathe your first and last in a faraway country that one will never find on a map. You breathe and your heart either beats fast with fright or does not beat at all. You are in a coma or in a state they call pre-death or post-life. Then a midwife comes and pulls you out of your mother’s womb. But your heart is not broken; you just no longer feel it pounding. It might pound somewhere else, in another faraway country; as long as it is not broken. It may lie in a faraway coma; and yet comas are never far away. They are near at hand and you pick them up with a view to putting them in your brain. Coma A is better than Coma C.

You reach for a beautiful object, for beauty itself. But your left arm is not long enough to pick up beauty. Unfortunately you are left-handed and cannot use your right arm. Your left arm grows shorter and shorter as you endeavour to pick beauty up. Your arm looks like a hand now; it is so short you cannot touch your hair. Other people touch your hair all the time; you are unable to do so. Your hair is not beautiful;

it is not ugly either. One hair is ugly, but you have got around three hundred hairs. You are starting to get a few grey hairs now and you ask your friends to pull them out. They comply with your wish: they are friends indeed. You are a handsome old man. You do not break the mirror where your reflection seems to rest at last.

You have got your god; I have got mine. They are gods and fundamentally we believe in the same reality and unreality. Actually everything is real and also unreal – all depends on your point of view. My god is beautiful, for beauty counts in my life and my former lives. But in the days when I was in the midst of those lives and times, beauty was different. It was not beautiful at all. I worshipped ugly idols; I knelt down before stones and noses. There were no eyes in those days – only noses and chins. Those chins looked at you and you thought a lot of souls were hidden in them. The noses too seemed to have been made up of souls. A lot of souls came from mouths and they were as immortal as the gods. Or God. Or *Gott*. Or a Goth. Or a goth.

You are yourself and I am myself. I am also *your* self sometimes, but not tonight, not tonight. Tonight I am God and a number of archangels. I am also just a number and I have no idea what number it is *inside* the universe. I think I know what it is outdoors, in outer space. But not in Greater London where there are too many numbers. And my number is in a class of its own. I think of this number and divide it by two. And I become two or three, as the case may be. And then I realise I am Number One or the One. Once again I am God and the Absolute, for I am Macrocosmic, microcosmic and cosmic. And I am nothing at the same time; or at another time. I am a worm, a maggot; I am God. I am found in decaying meat and other food.

Weariness is not private. The entire universe is weary. Its waves and particles communicate this mood or state of affairs to the inhabitants of the universe, be they plants or mammoths. And every creature radiates twice as much weariness from inside as it receives from the universe, mainly from the Andromeda Galaxy. Weariness permeates all universes that contaminate one another. There is weariness everywhere, even in business-oriented regions. Everybody is ready to drop and everybody drops. And there are many drops of those drops and other drops. They call it weariness-rain or weariness-stain. Weariness stains terribly; it is really difficult to get it out of human beings. And if you succeed in getting weariness out of your brain, it enters another brain. And you realise it is *your* brain, your *other* brain.

It is slow today. It is not heavy-going; it is slow-ungoing. Nothing goes, but nothing stops either. It is a non-stop ungoing. It jerks all the time. It jerks to a halt but does not halt. It goes on jerking and spurting as if blood was leaving your veins. Not quite. The blood remains near your body or just on your skin. It loves your veins so much it is loath to leave them. It leaves them but stays very close to them, prepared to go back at the earliest opportunity. If it delays now, opportunities might be lost. Your blood does

delay and the earliest opportunity is lost; so is the latest opportunity. Your blood stays on the skin and everyone thinks you are mortally wounded. An ambulance conveys you to a hospital and a nurse tries to remove the blood from your skin. The blood stays forever.

Let it go, let it go. But neither things nor humans are ready to go when they do not feel like it. Today they do not feel like it. They stay and stare at you. You let go of them and they stare at you for hours. They touch you as well: both things and humans are touchy-feely. They touch you and one might say they caress you; they stroke your body and even your soul. But one says nothing and they do not caress you. They let you down and you go down – not as far as hell. You stop somewhere in between hell and non-hell. The latter is also hell, but it is even worse because you do not know whether you are in paradise or in hell. You are in a well and there is water at the bottom of it. You are not at the bottom. You are in between water and air; you neither drink nor breathe. You sneeze.

Tomorrow or today. And what if this day does not come? Or any other day? It does not and you stay in bed or in any other receptacle and say your prayers. Or you say nothing, for you are hard of hearing and you create God in your image. So God hears nothing and you do not say your prayers. You say something else; so do I. That is what I have in common with you. There are people who do not say anything, never ever. We do say something and that is very important. We are logos and also players. And we are wearing shirts with our sponsor's logo. Our games attract a lot of fans who dance whenever we do not play. We play the game of Creation and everyone knows it is a divine game. We need a minimum of four billion people to play this game.

Yet you know it is not like that. It is not like anything. It is not Like; nor is it Luke. It is just a slice of whatever it is. If you slice life thinly you get many slices, and all of them contain a bit of life. One slice is L; another F. Then you get a few slices of death. One slice is Cancer; another Stroke. You stroke your stroke and are granted a last-minute reprieve: you live until Christmas. Then you are reborn, for everyone is reborn or born at Christmas. It is nice to be with family and friends at Christmas; and also with enemies, for you have to forgive them their sins, turning your cheeks at regular intervals. As you turn you cheeks your stroke becomes a Christmas pudding. You stroke your cancer and cancel it.

It does not do what one should do. All doings fall through, but there are no doings – only non-doings and undosings. I am not fond of undosings; I do do them sometimes. I have to undo my passions, sins and whatever interferes, intervenes and comes, for something always comes, flies, hovers overhead. It also hovers underhead and middlehead. And words hover over themselves and under other words. But they no longer count. Deeds also hover underhead and in the middle of it. You feel your deeds, whatever they are, in the middle of your head. And this phenomenon has nothing to do with guilt. You just have your

deeds in the middle of your brain, mind and history. These deeds stay in the middle of your history and you have to atone for them. You do and go to the Bahamas.

Just another thing or sound. A sound is not a thing: it is part of the air. You hear both sounds and airs, and sometimes they are called arias. Papageno sings his aria or rather pu-pu-pu-pu-pu-pu-pu-pu-pu-pu. And when he finds a mistress, he sings pa-pa-pa-pa-pa-pa. Perhaps he wants to sing da-da-da-da-dy-dy-dy-dy. I know a cat whose name is Didi. In the Fifties Brazil was proud of Didi, a famous footballer. What counts is your song. You sing son-son-son-son, which means dream in Russian. Then you sing dre-dre-dre-dre-am-am-am-am. Then you sing I-I-I-I. I-am-I-am. You do not become immortal and sometimes you are not alive despite your song. You are half-born, unborn, preborn, postborn. You are post and also '*on*', which means 'he' in Russian. And also '*ona*', which means 'Papagena'.

Unrest is even more desirable than rest, whatever they say about peace. Why should one be peaceful? Is the body peaceful? Yes, there are no more desires in it. Is the mind peaceful? Yes, it repeats ta-ta-ta-ta-ta-ta-ta. And your guru says that one letter is enough: two letters perturb the spirit. And any perturbed spirit should rest. So you say a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a. And you add an exclamation mark. Once again you are screaming with pain. But you have no wish to beg for an anaesthetic because you are a stoic. At least you suppress this wish but you cannot repress this sudden desire to repeat the letter 'a' supported and sustained by an exclamation mark. Then your 'a' disappears and what remains amounts to a mere exclamation mark that you repeat over and over again.

What is the news? There are a few pieces of news under the sun. The first piece of news says there is a piece of news. The second piece lets you know a few things about the sun and its existence. The sun rises in the east and sets in the west. This is hardly a piece of news. You get rid of it so as not to clutter your brain with the pieces of old news, and the sun no longer rises; it only sets in the east. This is a piece of news and you keep it in the middle of your brain. Now the sun sets in the middle of your brain and you wonder if this centre is situated in the east or the west. You realise that this centre is at the centre of the Earth – on account of the laws of gravity. You must have died a long time ago and the dead are the centrepiece of the Earth, of the universe.

And what if? And if what? What can one do with what? One can deal with how and even know-how. One has enough technical know-how to handle any know-how appropriately. But there are know-hows you fail to understand and therefore they handle you – appropriately. They have enough technical know-how to know how to deal with human beings and beings in general. And also with mere humans. A human turns up – a mere human, nothing to write home about – and they begin to tamper with him or her, with a mere child. And you can see at once that this human has been tampered with. It has not

brushed its hair and its clothes are rumpled. Now a few know-hows crumple it up and throw it in the bin. It is neither a man, nor a woman, nor a child. That is it. And what if it is what? What not?

No more questions. No more answers. Please, please. Nevertheless they ask and answers come at once. They come from computers and they are wrong. You accused your computer and the accused pleaded not guilty on grounds of diminished responsibility. You increased its responsibility and your computer began to ask you questions instead of answering them. You answer, I answer. There are answers everywhere and for once they are right. They say that erupting volcanoes discharge massive quantities of dust into the stratosphere. They say you may become ashes because of this dust. They say the meeting was disrupted by a group of protesters who shouted and threw fruit at the speaker. What meeting? What fruit? Apparently the speaker was God and the fruit forbidden.

Quietude, disquietude. What is the difference? Another question. Another answer: the difference boils down to 'dis'. In your poems you reflect on the quietude of the countryside. You read Shakespeare's *Tempest* and forget about the sea: you live in the country. In your next poem you reflect on the disquietude of the countryside. You recall a recent storm and write another poem on 'dis'. But the countryside is the same, whether you add this 'dis' to it or not. The countryside depends more on those who are determined to build hotels in it. No weather has anything to do with it except that you may write on its quietude or disquietude. You listen to a Chopin étude and remove 'qui' and 'disqui'. The countryside is the same; and yet there is a new hotel in the middle of it or rather on the left-hand side.

There are facts that are nowhere. They go from one invisibility to another. They may play an important part in our lives, but they are neither facts, nor waves, nor sensations. They are at the centre of the non-centre; they talk deaf-and-dumb languages. All across Europe, wherever you look, facts are in decline and non-fact rates are soaring. They are not fireworks: they do not soar up into the sky. They soar up into the Earth, for non-facts behave like that, and no one knows what that means in the context; or like, for that matter. And matter does not matter. It is your spirit you should take care of. You do take care of it and your spirit soars up into the Earth. And an old lullaby comes to you; so does a new lullaby. An old-but-not-too-old lullaby comes as well. You listen to it endlessly.

Do you know what you are talking about? You know what you will never talk about. Talking, smoking, drinking. Time goes on; it also talks and smokes. But time does not drink, for it is bad for time's health. Time drinks two glasses of red wine every day because it is good for time's health. Time smokes and there is no smoke, as everyone knows. Everything is on fire. Our Buddha, Buddha. What was he talking about? What does it matter if we die here, tomorrow, in the arms of our beloved? Why not live one day, drinking three bottles of Burgundy, having sex with nine women? On fire, on fire. No point in taking this fire with me: it is in my body. No point in leaving it behind. Why should I leave my body? Makes

no sense, does it? I love my body as much as I love my beloved whose breasts are as beautiful and juicy as peaches.

Importance and unimportance. On this depends your life and wellbeing; and welfare. On that depends almost nothing or next to nothing. You do not die and you have enough money to buy bread and butter. Even your tea is available somewhere. You drink this tea and many other teas. And you think there are many seas where you can enjoy yourself, provided you are on a boat. You visualise a boat and also a galaxy where you could be happy forever. Present tonight at the long-awaited opening of this film are a whole galaxy of stars from the acting and musical professions. You are also present in one galaxy, in another. You are a star, otherwise you would not be in a galaxy. You would be on the Earth where there are humans, animals and plants. On the Earth you would be a plant or an insect. You would be a grain of rice.

There are signals that come from nowhere or somewhere; or elsewhere. They come from the unborn or postborn. We receive them and try to deal with them. Whatever happens in our life has an impact on us and we respond to it either by lying down and sleeping or by giving vent to our feelings. We can believe we have not heard anything. Yet the music we associate with the spheres comes and often we do our best to express it. We are no longer in our beds; we express this music either by means of notes or words. But words are arrogant: they play with this music. And each word plays with another word to the detriment of music. They drown it out. They attack it through neologisms, among other things. And there are many other things. There is only one music.

Nothing comes. There are a few goings, but they do not bring anything. They take something away and one wishes they could take away away. They take away only ins, not even outs, let alone aways. Their ways are impenetrable and imponderable. You may shout and strip your clothes off. They will not take off away; they are likely to concentrate on your clothes. Why is the world fragile? You speak too often of the world and you do not know what it is. Is it a damp patch you see in front of you? Is it today's newspapers? They speak of crashes and mashed potatoes. The world is full of mashed potatoes. At least the damp patch is full of them. It is a dish you cannot eat. Eat your own failure, your death and resurrection. Drink your own blood. You are thirsty, aren't you? Drink your own blood.

Blood is transparent; so are brotherhoods. We are brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews. The same water flows through our veins and also outside them. We are mostly water; the rest is the Earth, the air and heat. When we are on a beach, we take advantage of the water and air, and we care chiefly about the sun. Heat, cold. What do we care about all of them? The ingredients of life. They are life and not-life, no-life, no-air. You should put some air in your souls: they look flat to me. The same goes for your bodies and modes of contamination. You contaminate yourself; so do others. So do I and I am already

the soul because I incarnate it. If you wish to know if human beings have souls, you should look at me: I am the soul incarnate. And this soul of mine is fatally ill. Yet it is immortal. It is as immortal as cancer.

Another day, another life. These lives are blind: they do not see each other. They see only parts of their bodies. And their bodies listen to other parts, to harmonies and melodies. They hear next to nothing and that is what Beethoven's music is about. It is not nothing; it is next, next, next. Every note is next. It goes forward and sideways. It does not stay like Schubert's notes. Beethoven goes, finds the gods and pilgrims; and their paradises. His lives are blind, but they find whatever they are looking for. One wonders if they are looking for something, if they are looking at their own lives. They are looking in their mirrors, at their sons, at their yeses, and their noes are their yeses. That is how it should be and 'should' is their keyword. It is also their keylife, their key. And this key does not open anything except itself.

Dirt and mud. A lot of purity. That is how we are. There are no other things except a few sounds. They do not speak of dirt and purity. They have *their* purity to speak of. How pure these sounds are! They are as pure as the soul of God; or His body. They do not come from the domain of music; they do not come at all. They are there; they have been there for millennia. We measure time in accordance with these sounds. When we talk about centuries, we think about these sounds. They do not think about us: they have other things to do. They measure life and space where they resound. They do not resound. They are inaudible; and also audible. They are both audible and inaudible. Inaudible sounds are empty and sounds should be half-empty, half-alive. As if they were half-eternal.

This is not a sound. It is perhaps a word that is a mute child. Perhaps it is no longer a child; it is an adult. But it is mute nonetheless. There is only one mute word in the world or outside it. We should listen to this word. The more we listen to it, the more we understand the word or the world. Why should we understand the world? It is not worth our while to understand it. But the word that does not speak might draw people's attention to whatever happens *outside* their lives and worlds. They take no notice of other worlds, of the margins of their books of life. And these books have only margins. If you walk on one of these margins, once in a while, you understand what all this is about. It is about some margins, other margins.

Only valleys and you cannot walk through them. You might walk through mountains, but there are no mountains. Only surfaces. I live on a surface, in a two-dimensional world. Then I rise and go to many spaces and heights. I am a road. As I leave my village, I climb steeply up the mountain. I am the sun. I climb higher and higher in the sky, in numerous galaxies. I climb and fall and climb again. I do not do anything. What do you do when you do not do anything? You do nothing. I do nothing. This nothing does not become everything. It is not nothing either. It is neither, neither, neither. I am a road. You can

should leave the building or the universe, as the case may be. In this case, we leave the universe and go on a drinking spree. And Satan goes on a killing spree. Or God.

Don't go! Don't leave me! And they leave you and me and those who stay somewhere. They leave all of us and go outdoors, into another world or dimension. In every dimension there are people who are doomed to unhappiness. They stay and everything, everybody leaves them. They are doomed to stay. They wish they could leave their doom, but they are chained to lampposts and the stake. Millions of human beings are chained to one stake, but they will not be burnt. Yet it is so cruel to keep animals and humans chained up like that all the time. It is probably better to burn them once and for all. But we are their brothers: other humans or animals. And the Inquisition is a thing of the past. So we just leave them in the lurch.

We are persevering with our crusade to fight Alzheimer's disease. How? By learning every poem by heart. We recall every nook and cranny of our native city and of all major cities of Europe. Doctors are trained to recognise the symptoms of different diseases, but we are not doctors. We recognise only the symptoms of Alzheimer's. Are we losing speech? Not at all: we talk day in, day out. We are garrulous and often talk nonsense. But our speech has not been lost yet. And we have no opportunity to talk to others, so we talk to ourselves. And we answer our own questions. And our answers are even longer than our exterior monologues. And every morning we run at such a pace that dogs cannot keep up with our bodies. We have not yet lost our movements. How do we manage to run so fast at our age?

I am sitting or lying in my bed. What does it matter! I am and I am what I am. And I am not what I am not. But sometimes I get the feeling I am what I am not. Or I am just am, not I. Nonsense. You wake up, drink a cup of tea and realise that life is waiting for you, lying in wait for you. Life attacks you; you stagger to the phone and call for help. No answer. Life attacks you once again. All these trees, leaves, stars. Their beauty and horror attack you and you stagger to another phone. You do not call for help: no point in calling and screaming. You listen to the dialling tone and realise that life is reduced to this piece of music. This is also life and it is as rich as the life of a multimillionaire who has just spent three months adrift on his yacht. This life of yours tells you that strawberries are plentiful in the summer.

Mozart was growing more and more transparent. In *Die Zauberflöte* his characters are afraid of dragons, queens, and the birds are performing a complex mating ritual – at least when Papageno sings and plays. And then there is a ritual that brings Tamino face to face with the truth. What does he know about the truth, even if this truth is not absolute? And Zorastro is too profound: Germany's leading bass. A guru, a parody of teaching. They often talk instead of singing because it is life and no one sings endlessly in real life. Through this opera, you can see life, another life, another vanity and joy. Even if you are dying,

you can be joyful, for there is a fugue somewhere. And fugues can be joyful. You say something, you answer. You are chasing your tail and nothing is more ritualistic than that.

You try to remember something that might otherwise slip out of your memory and embark upon a space odyssey – if you do not do your best to pin it against a wall. You wonder why you use the word ‘wall’ whenever you try to remember an episode from your past or someone else’s past or future. You have no idea what you are talking about, but one thing does not seem to escape your notice, however unreliable it seems to be in the light of your latest experience. What experience do you have in mind when speaking about your ability or inability to take notice? Of what? The wall. You have to climb over a ten-foot wall to get into the garden. What garden? The Garden of Eden. Now you remember it; your latest experience. What was before it? Another Garden of Eden. There are as many Gardens and Edens as words. You say, ‘The Garden of Eden.’ You repeat, ‘The Garden of Eden.’ The Garden of Eden, the Garden of Eden.

Yes, the wall; and you are sure that Pink Floyd has nothing to do with it, for all your nostalgic and sentimental attachment to this band. You see the wall clearly whenever your memory makes an effort as it searches for something that continues to escape your notice and, generally speaking, your life. For the moment you do not care about your life as such: only a few odds embedded in it excite your imagination and make your heart flutter and miss a beat. A few odds, a few ends. As you ponder your next move in the game – it is a game, isn’t it? – you stumble over a few words and one image. The words are: ‘end’, ‘ends’, ‘odd’, ‘odds’, ‘notice’, ‘garden’. The image: ‘The east wall of the mosque is covered with a beautiful mosaic.’

Once again the wall deflects me from my goal and for once I do not wonder what goal I have in mind. I must recall something, someone, a woman. ‘Eternal strife.’ What does it have to do with *my* past? I watched *My Fair Lady* several times in a row, many years ago, in the 20th century, in the middle of it. And I would repeat this experience whenever I was in the midst of my worries or in the midst of an economic crisis – my private crisis. The world can do whatever it likes; it is resolved to prosper and it does prosper sometimes, according to some reports. I do not prosper. Only my fair lady gives me a helping hand. I kiss this hand and she says, ‘Have another piece of cake. It’ll tide you over till supper, till Doomsday.’

I cherish my neighbours and kiss him and her – and their only child – on both cheeks instead of slapping them. You and I are also inseparable so that it does not really matter whether I say ‘I’ or ‘you’ or ‘one’ or ‘ego’ or ‘superego’, and so on and so forth. And so one, and so two and so three: we are all good friends and neighbours, and probably also twin brothers and sisters. All this depends on what angle of vision you adopt when looking at us, at our odds and ends, at our walls that bar our numerous paths and consequently deprive our memories of their treasure houses, fair ladies and gentlemen. My fair lady was

late home and, as usual, I had visions of her lying dead in some alley. I say, 'My fair lady' and a vision of beaches and blue seas immediately springs to mind.

Well, once again you are in the midst of your financial and psychological worries which are inseparable, you are sorry to say. I am also sorry to say all that because I am sorry anyway. I was woken in the night by the wail of ambulance sirens. They wailed and wailed and wailed. A number of women gathered around some coffin or other and began to wail, as was the custom in the region. Needless to say, it was a dream. I do not like dreams, even if they are not nightmares. This dream was not a nightmare. I listened to this wailing and thought that Mahler's *Tenth* was akin to it. Much softer, much softer. I have no idea how the world may end, but I hope it will end with this movement. Mahler's *Eleventh*, no less.

I was determined to find an episode or a face buried in the past, and this time I will not blame my neighbours for whatever happens in my life, with my walls and dolls. Our memory offers us a lot of dolls to play with and we indulge in this pastime to the exclusion of other pastimes or merely times that go and march somewhere, out of our reach. I remember I had a brother; at least one brother of mine was born in the late Thirties and then the war began and all brothers and sisters disappeared to battlefields and concentration camps. My parents did all they could to protect me from negative emotions so I never really knew for sure whether I had a brother or a sister, and I cannot say I am happy now. I am alone, on my own, and no longer enjoy my solitude; at least I do not enjoy it *thoroughly*.

A young man used to come to our house and I thought he was my distant cousin of sorts or just a friend of my father who had many friends. And these friends – some of them were his enemies in disguise – did not seem to be related by blood. Nor was my father related to them either by blood or by any other means, for they often quarrelled and none of them were on the same wavelength. We had many waves – short waves, long ones – but none of these waves seemed to coincide with what we thought or did together. But we were happy somehow because from time to time human beings are happy when they are together and can look at each other unless there is a wall between them. There was a wall. There are walls everywhere, as they say. I say that too. What else could I say? Paradise?

There are no holes in these walls. In other words, no one drills holes in them and you have no alternative but to spend your life within a number of walls and halls where no one looks at you, let alone holds you in their arms. There are many arms beyond these walls and even in your room, but they do not hold you. Nor do they drop you. They leave you alone. You drop, you rise, you jump, you fly. The arms take no notice of your dance. They hang between the walls, sometimes on a clothes line. No one washes them and one wonders why they have to dry on a clothes line, in your room. Sometimes you get the feeling they salute you. They do not; nor do they wave you goodbye. They are so annoyed they do not even wave goodbye to you. And yet these arms do wave goodbye to somebody. These arms have got to swing.

Many people think they talk to others; yet they just talk to themselves because they have no one else in their minds. You have an object or subject in your mind and you cannot get rid of it, even if you are fascinated to hear what happens in France, in Russia and in the United States where many events are under way, in the sky, in skyscrapers. You see your mind and the wall you come across whenever you take the trouble to see your mind and whatever stands in it – a monument of sorts. What is this monument? Yourself and your last love. This love does not last and again it is your own monument you see in your mind. Wind and rain have already eroded this monument into shapeless lumps of stone. You are a lump of stone. You recognise yourself.

I was fifteen and my experience in the public domain was limited to school and the games I would get involved in when my schoolmates deigned to take notice of my presence. My brother, on the other hand, did take notice of my ego to the point of opening a bottle of cognac in my room. I drank one third of it and collapsed; at least this word seems to be related to that experience which was a turning point in my life, although I am not a drunkard, contrary to what my neighbours might think about my behaviour, gait and the words I utter in front of them and their dogs. Do I speak to them about walls, dolls and empty halls where I spend a lot of time, waiting for sounds, soul mates and *prima materia* out of which I might create my philosopher's stones? My rainbow and Valhalla.

Why was it a *turning* point in my life? Did my life turn this way or that, showing me a few aspects of the universe I had missed in my childhood and at puberty? The universe plays hide-and-seek with its inhabitants all the more insidiously since they see it all the time. Their microscopes and telescopes allow them to get in touch with the innermost and deepest recesses of what Adam called the universe, the cosmos and simply malediction, for whatever surrounds men and women on all sides was cursed a long time ago – even *before* the Big Bang. What *was* before the Big Bang? Another curse, another malediction and benediction. A beneficent aunt. A stay in the pre-Big-Bang universe might be beneficial to your health.

Did my brother open the same of bottle of cognac on the verge of the Creation? On the verge of the precipice into which we have been falling ever since the Big Bang? Falling headlong. Falling, swimming in the air. That is what we do once we are allowed to do something. Not necessarily gymnastics and history homework. Then we fly for a while and swim again if our wings drop and disappear. We swim, dance and count the stars, for we are mathematicians, astronomers and musicians. We compose the music of the spheres and the spheres listen to this music. So do the gods in their Valhallas. They walk along their rainbows towards their walls and listen to our music of the spheres. So do rainbows, bows and rains. *Das Reingold. Die Zauberflöte.*

I am certainly entitled to speak of my brother and this claim I am making is all the more justifiable since I did have a brother in days of yore, in 1938 when he was born; he also *died* in 1938 and was therefore spared the horrors of the war – the blockade of our native city, among other things. Leningrad, St Petersburg. He did not die of hunger and, strange as it may seem, I do not know what he died of because I was born neither in 1938 nor in 1939, at the very end of the dishonest decade. No, I was born *after* the war as if my parents had decided to spare me the suffering they went through as they tried to get food and medicine in the city deprived of both on account of the blockade. Anyway, I did all I could to postpone my birth indefinitely. Eternity was out of my reach, as usual.

There is still some hope that the economic blockade will work and make military intervention unnecessary. That is what they say whenever a country – or rather its government – disobeys the democratic rules which they violate on a regular basis, for these rules are *their* rules and they do with them whatever they wish, supplying a lot of exceptions and suchlike. The number of exceptions has risen sharply this month so today there are more exceptions than rules; and these exceptions neither prove nor stretch the rules – that is the nature of the beast. Any blockade is Cerberus whose heads multiply and replenish the Earth. And those in charge go on saying he *should* replenish the Earth. The same goes for his teeth. He guards the entrance to Evil.

Am I still looking for a brother? The Karamazovs. Why not Ivan, for instance? Or Dimitri? He has to climb over a ten-foot *wall* to get into his father's garden, but this up-to-heaven wall turns into a metaphor as he tries to visualise his future trials and tribulations. There is a wall in front of him and if he climbs over this wall, he is likely to kill his father or at least he may be *tempted* to kill him, which amounts to the same thing: what counts is your intention, not your deed, if any. There are no deeds and only intentions thrive and blossom either in the Garden of Eden or in the Palace of Hell where you find many flowers as if this house was the Palace of Evil and Good. Or Baudelaire's poems.

You cannot have a sister because you are bound to sleep with her and go to Hell as a result of your misplaced loyalty, passion and love. Your sister must be allowed to marry a handsome young man instead of wasting her time in your company, especially if you teach her philosophy, as Musil's protagonist does in the famous novel. The novel is famous on account of this incestuous relationship as if brothers and sisters were not in the habit of making love all the time – even when their parents watch them and do their best to prevent them kissing and cuddling. Two brothers go for each other with their fists and have to be pulled apart. Our brother and sister meet in the centre of a castle and have sex under their mother's nose. Their mother is too weak and she leaves them alone.

My parents might have wanted me to have *some* partner, some kind of relative, who, for want of anything and anybody better, was capable of teaching me a few rules and gestures which usually make people

happy. For instance, you touch yourself or someone else, and you feel happy, even though a mere touch is too insignificant in comparison with a castle and a sports car. You touch a human being and feel the warmth of his or her body. But this body may disappear overnight, whereas your Ferrari awaits you in your garage, whatever your mood and their weather forecast. This body does disappear and you get into your Ferrari. You drive through landscapes and every tree is a body you can caress to your heart's content. So is a bush, your child. You have got many children.

Your grandfather was hale and hearty, walking five miles each day before breakfast, and you inherited his genes – no doubt about that. Yet you know that your other grandfather died of a heart attack at the age of 40, which does not prevent you from *running* five miles each day: you prefer jogging to walking. At some point, you must have got rid of this grandfather's genes and now you can become immortal, provided you do not smoke too much either before breakfast or after it. You neither smoke nor drink whisky and you die at the age of 50 as if nothing had ever happened in your life; no genes, no jeans, in other words. Nothing happens *after* your life and once again you do not care about happenings and unhappenings. They unhappen; you are happy.

No one knows one's own wishes because they are legion and a nuisance. You wish to be left in peace and there are many peaces you wish to acquire, to get or inherit: peace of mind, peace of body, peace of unconscious, peace of your room and your bed, especially at night. You have a kind of peace outside your body, but what happens inside is out of your reach: you can rule the waves, the sands, the particles of all sorts except your own particles and cells. You are powerless in the presence of your intestines and indigestion. How can you get by on so little money, so few figments of your imagination? You *cannot*, so you do not get by on this and that, on anything. You get out, away, in. You have no wish to get it: it is better to get out, away. Away, away. You dream; you do not. You do not. Do not.

Who am I within the framework of Chinese poetry? I have younger brothers, I have younger brothers, all far away. They are too far away – to the point of severing diplomatic relations with other brothers, sisters and myself. 'We live apart, drifting farther; we never see each other.' That is true, that is true. The dead and the living live apart and drift out to sea, from the marshes, from the Garden of Eden and from Hyde Park. They drift away in twos and threes, in fours and fives. There are many living dead among these sixes and sevens. And eights, and eights, and eights, let alone all the ninths we come across as we follow our path to salvation. One is saved, eight, nine; the others are damned. Number ten, number ten. My number. Number eleven.

I do not let anybody into my life and whenever a being – either human or inhuman – appears on the threshold of my house, I say to it, 'Go away, my dear. You're perhaps my dearest wife, child, brother or sister. You've got a beautiful pair of eyes. They're blue; so are the skies. But what could I do with

your eyes? With the skies? Should I look at them for hours and centuries? Go away, my dear skies, otherwise I'll be disappointed once again.' And the being goes away because this being or non-being is not a rowdy gate-crasher and I am left alone, on my own, unknown to myself and others, to beings and non-beings. I am probably known to neither-beings, either-beings, up-beings, upbeats, downbeats, beats, third beats. I am known to music.

Life has not got a clue about life. It is always wide of the mark. It is either short or wide; it is never the right size. It is not absurd at all. If it was absurd, it would be funny and one could enjoy it thoroughly. It is just clueless, burlesque, *clownesque*. It sticks its tongue out; yet it has no tongue. It sticks everything out: arms, legs, stomachs. Bodies are lives; so are nobodies. Matters are also lives; so are no-matters. A malediction, a diction. A word is God. Of course, it cannot be otherwise. It can, it can. It is otherwise and you go through a number of steppes and steps. You take a step and find yourself in the middle of nowhere. You have lived for centuries on the Russian steppes, and these centuries go on. So do you. Yet you still live on the steppes, under the steps. Sometimes they are Russian, sometimes French. They are mostly stateless.

You cannot come and go. You are rooted to the spot. And this spot is rooted to another spot. The latter takes root; so does the former. Yet another spot is an incompetent bungler and so fails to take root and dies. Some spots are like trees; others like weeds. For a while you fly in between one spot and another. One spot is the Earth; the other is not the sky, contrary to what you may think. The other spot is a spiritual substance, but not an angel. There are no angels in the universe. A spot descends upon you and says, 'You are pregnant,' or 'You'll never be pregnant.' The spot has a pair of wings and you may paint it, if you feel like. It is a spotless spot: it has nothing to do with a spot of grease on your tie. After a while the spotless spot takes wing; so does your imagination. There are still a few stray spots of paint on the windowpane.

Time is a series of indivisible instants. Then you realise that every instant has been divided into smaller, more manageable sections. It is easier to handle half-instants than full-grown ones. It is easier to stop a half-instant than whatever Faust attempted to stop in the course of his famous monologue. Besides, you will not land in Hell if you stop a half-instant. Every week, as children, we are beaten for some minor misdemeanours. You catch a half-instant and hold it by its tail. It cries and tries to wrench itself free. The harder it tries, the tighter you hold it. Then you let it go, but it is so weary it cannot go far. It cannot walk at all, let alone fly. It crawls under a bed, sighing in despair. The half-instant's tail has been peeping out from under the bed for an hour or so.

Space is a series of indivisible points. We are determined to divide them equally among us. And there are not enough points for all, according to our calculations. So we divide each point into four pieces as

if it was a piece of cake. It is not: we cannot eat it. Nor can we have it. Space multiplies and replenishes the Earth and also a few galaxies, a few black holes. Space grows black and we like only blue and green spaces. We spend most of our time on the grass, strumming our guitars, looking at the sky. The grass is black today; so are our guitars. The sounds we produce are also black, and they remain so even when we put our guitars away. Our words are black; at least their space is black. But their time remains blue and green, whatever happens.

‘Space does not consist of simple parts, but of spaces,’ says Kant. And spaces are not simple parts. They are spaces in their own right. Let us call a space a space and not just a part. How many spaces does space contain? As many as you wish. You wish to be in Petersburg and in Moscow – at the same time. So you pick up two spaces and put them together, side by side. For your left leg, for your right leg. But you cannot do that with parts. These are rebellious and refuse to budge from where they are. Spaces are as mobile as mobile phones. You call your American friend and send him a space – a birthday present. You pick up a beautiful space and send it to him. He receives it and you talk about it for a while. This space is as beautiful and precious as a precious stone. Such spaces are few and far between.

The Black Death – a procedure that might kill an extremely large number of people in the centuries to come, to go away. A few planets, a few stars, many rocky objects with widths from over 900 kilometres to less than one kilometre, a few black holes. It is easy to murder humans by dropping them into these holes. Cancers are long and tiresome. Besides, recent advances in medical science mean that some of them can now be cured. But if you find yourself inside a black hole, you will die almost immediately. First you will go blind, however. Then you will be almost deafened by the roar of the surf. You will recall the Black Sea. The last memory. It is death.

In our consciousness there is multiplicity and unity. There are many states in it and the unity does its best to bind them together. However, some states are loath to join the unity. They claim the moral high ground and say that rubbing shoulders with other states might degrade them. But the unity reminds them that any unity, be it God, the One or the Absolute, unquestionably has a good influence over whoever or whatever it comes across. It cannot be otherwise, for monotheism is far superior to polytheism, and for once you should not say, ‘And vice versa.’ But these rebellious states do not listen to reason. They listen to unreason that leads them astray. The superiority complex, the persecution complex. They are thought to have originated in these outsiders. The more of them you have in your consciousness, the more you stick out in a crowd.

Inspired by Bergson, you set up the unity of duration as concrete reality. Your memories last and they are as concrete as reinforced concrete. You wake up and drink a cup of coffee. Of course the multiplicity of the moments you devote to this ritual counts as well, but there is the unity of coffee in your life. And

you recall many visitors who have drunk coffee with you either at your place or in the streets, in cafés. There is a coffee unity in your life or a coffee duration that does not depend on real time, whatever that is. There is also a wine unity, a wine duration and you often forget time when drinking a bottle of Burgundy – or wine of any other origin. Even a bottle of beer makes you forget your appointments and duties. A dozen bottles of Belgian beer.

A spatial form is not essential to time. Time is often formless. You shut your eyes and even your inner visions leave you alone. You do not see anything, but time carries on whatever it can carry on and on, and you get the feeling it does this outside of any space, however small. Time is quasi-spaceless and even if you put it inside a dot, it will continue to tick as if implying that it is able to keep things ticking over in the world until you get back. But you do not get back. You are outside, you are an outsider. You are in your garden, on the grass, watching grasshoppers. But they are in the kingdom of time. They hop across the grass, as do a few birds. So do you, as a matter of fact. With your feet tied together you can only move in little hops. Your feet are tied; so are your thoughts. Hop, hop, hop. You are back.

You are longing to destroy the ‘now’ from within, from your body. It is not now: neither your body nor your thoughts are now, in the now, in the know. You do not know anything and you admit it to yourself and others. You are in the ‘ever’ and ‘never’. You are also in the ‘never-never’; and in the ‘never-ever’. From within you destroy not only the ‘now’ but also the ‘then’. By destroying the ‘then’ you become a bit more zen. You lord it over the ‘now’, the ‘when’ and even the ‘where’. You are nowhere and you know it. But not everyone agrees with you. Then you show them the ‘here’ and its limits. Thanks to Zen, you transcend these spatial barriers and find yourself in the ‘not here’ and also in the ‘not there’. And also in the ‘not in between’. In the ‘ween’.

If in time there exists any lapse – according to Bradley – this time is just appearance. It appears but you cannot live through it. There are only lapses and you touch them all the time. Not only your memory lapses, mind you. There are many lapses in your mind and some of them have nothing to do with memory or duration. Death is the biggest lapse, as everyone knows; so is life. Only what they call ‘non-being’ has no lapses. It lapses neither into silence nor into nonsense. Nor does it recall anything: it has never been anything and only *something* is plagued by the past and doubts. Time is a computer: it makes a continuous low buzzing noise. Continuous pain. That is also time. And space. Where is your pain? In your stomach, in your head, in your back, in your legs. Your space-time.

Time, like space, has most evidently proved not to be real. According to Bradley. You cannot touch it and it often lapses into silence – whenever you experience your duration, going towards the past where you buried all your mothers. No ticks, no tocks, no cocks: they do not even start to crow. Of course you do not betray anyone: you have no time for it. Time passes so quickly when you are enjoying yourself.

But you are not enjoying yourself. So time does not pass; nor does it exist. If you do not exist, you are not allowed to pass, to move. You sit in your armchair and watch TV. No, TV reflects time and you do not like time and its mirrors. You do not watch anything, not even your weight or your language. Only four-letter words, nothing else.

If space has no definite boundaries, it is not space. There must be something outside space. According to Bradley. What is outside space? My house is not big; it has definite boundaries. Even the Chateau de Versailles has them. I lived outside the chateau. There was a sort of space in my life; and also in the life of the Chateau de Versailles. Now I live in my house, within my garden. There is nothing outside, not even the street where I live. I must have abolished all spaces and probably all times. This night is abolished: I slept and had no dreams. And yesterday I just looked at the sky or whatever they call clouds and weasels. There were elephants in the sky; and also sputniks. A few dogs circled for years before receiving permission to land.

It cannot be otherwise, at least if space is to be space. Why should it be space? Does God think that Creation is linked to space, to the Earth? Space can be happiness, beauty. If it is *real* space, it is ugly in spite of gardens, trees and many stars. If space is just beauty, it is beautiful. But you have to remove from it whatever is *not* beautiful. You remove it and realise there is no space. It does not exist; there is only beauty. The pictures we admire are not spatial. Nor are they in the mind which is also spatial to some extent. They are nowhere – not in the museums where they hang and receive a lot of tourists. They are under the stars, above them; or in blue holes, whatever they are. We have no idea what they are and what all this means. But it does mean something or nothing. And nothing is also something, somewhere.

What comes to mind is timeless. You are tempted to say that nothing comes to mind. You are weary of your mind, of whatever comes to it. Everything should go and it goes, whatever you do. You do nothing and something goes and comes. You pay no attention to whatever comes, but it goes on coming. There is a source of light and you welcome it, in spite of everything. And this is a source of night, one of its sources. You do not welcome anything; you are just subjected to unfair treatment. Or to fair treatment, as the case may be. Or you are objected to some treatment or other. You are both an object and a subject; so are they, whoever they are. You listen and hear Mahler's *Tenth*, its first and only movement. The end of the tether, of Mother.

Absolute space and absolute motion. My house is not absolute; it is part of what we have known since the beginning of what they call a 'shortage of cheap housing in the region'. There are shortages everywhere and even our minds are subjected to this rule. The only exception is probably dollars, but they do not grow on trees and therefore there is also a shortage of dollars. But there are so many trees that we wonder if dollars cannot grow on them. We plant many dollar-trees and dollars fall into our

hands. These are particular spaces and particular motions. They are not absolute, otherwise there would be no poverty in the world. Twenty million people face starvation unless a vast emergency aid programme is launched. We plant dollar-trees and everyone eats caviar. Everything is absolute.

Nothing can be seen except what exists. So you should not say to yourself that nothing exists, otherwise you will go blind. You do not see your own thoughts; you just think them. They come into your head and kick up a tremendous fuss about having to think. You do not leave them alone. You put them to numerous tests; you contradict them and sometimes destroy their leaders. You banish some of them forever, but they come back and kick up another fuss. Some of them are always nagging you about your diet – to the detriment of spiritual and intellectual thoughts. These crouch down behind bushes – there is a garden in your brain – whereas the diet-oriented thoughts pace up and down, removing pastries, spaghetti, lasagna, vermicelli, ravioli and cannelloni. After their departure you find a cucumber and one thought only: peel the cucumber and chop it into small cubes.

‘Through what is not yet, through what has no length, it passes into what is now no longer,’ says St Augustine. Apparently he enlarges upon time that comes from the future. But the future does not exist. Time, time. How can it come from a non-existent country? How can you come from the womb of a mother who has not yet been born? What is more, she will never be born and will remain unborn until Doomsday. The Supreme Judge is likely to ask her why she has never taken the trouble to see the light of day. Doesn’t she like this light? Is she blind? Yes, she is: all those who remain unborn are blind. Such is their destiny. They are also deaf and therefore cannot hear the music of the spheres. Had they heard a few notes of this piece of music, they would have sprung to life. In the twinkling of an eye. But no eyes twinkle; no notes resound in the universe.

Rest and motion. Are they different? They are not. Suppose you travel by night and rest by day. But you are still in the same room and even in the same bed. All right – you decide to travel by day and rest by night. You are still in the same room, for all your motions and emotions. Rest, rest. No point in trying to avenge yourself through your relatives. Your mother promised that she would not rest until the murderer of her son was caught and imprisoned. You are her son and whenever she falls asleep, you come and say to both your mother and father, ‘Come on, you two, get a move on!’ Your father continues to snore. Your mother gets up and looks at her hands. ‘Blood, blood, blood,’ she says. Did she murder her son a few years ago? She runs after herself, but fails to catch up with herself. To do so, she must remain motionless.

What are you doing with yourself, with others? Nothing, you are not doing anything. Your body is at rest; yet it is not in a coffin. Nor are you buried alive. You are alive, but not buried. Others have been buried since the Big Bang, many others. But you are not buried. You are just tired; so is your voice.

Your voice says, 'I'm tired,' and everybody believes you because your voice sounds tired. It also crackles as if there was a radio in your lungs. One can see a dull glow given off by your eyes. It is as if there was a television set in your brain, a black-and-white TV. There are women who love helpless and hopeless men. The maternal instinct, you know. A woman comes and says as she looks into your eyes, 'It's one of the few television programmes that I always make a point of watching.' But she asks you to turn your radio down. It reminds her of both asthma and tuberculosis.

Our moods change all the time, in accordance with the sky and its colours, and rains and torrents. If we have no umbrella and it rains in torrents, you should not ask, 'Why are you in such a foul mood this morning?' But our mood swings between despair and elation. You bring us an umbrella and we are elated, happy, as if we had won the lottery. Happiness is not divisible. If you are happy, you are happy, even if the source of your happiness is just an umbrella, not eight million dollars. If you believe in God, you believe in God. If you doubt, you doubt. The world is monotheistic: one God, one happiness, one despair, one angst, one death, one life, one tear. This monotheism is counterbalanced by the multiplicity of moods. But a bottle of wine is sure to put you in an amiable mood. One mood.

Joy is good for our health. We should enjoy ourselves whenever we can. And even if we cannot enjoy ourselves, any of our selves, we should enjoy one cell of our being. How? By looking at a prison cell, for instance. You look at it and say to yourself, 'Terrific! Someone else is inside. And I'm outside because there's no room for a second person in this cell. Anyway, I'm free and this person is not. He must have murdered somebody. I've murdered only thousands of flies. Yes, I must admit that I hurt and harm a lot of flies, but no one puts you in prison for that. Yes, I enjoy killing flies. Whenever I kill a fly, I jump for joy. And if I'm on top form, I may kill as many as 50 flies in the space of three hours. The whole space of my room is filled with their corpses. And if I break my own record, killing as many as 51 flies, I'm flooded with joy. And I prefer this flood to any other flood.'

Our foundations are invisible, untouchable and even unthinkable. And if we do think about them from time to time, it does not mean anything: we think about other foundations, whereas our universal foundations elude us continuously. Usually we think in terms of foundation stones. Sure enough, there are many skyscrapers around us and, once upon a time, all of them were foundation stones, nothing else. Of course they were also earth, mud and holes. Our 'I' is everywhere, even in those holes we cannot see on account of the skyscrapers. If we raze them to the ground, we may notice our intangible 'I' that is the foundation stone of the universe. After a bombing raid, this 'I' may be seen in holes and even in the sky, amidst the clouds. Sages compare our ego to a skyscraper that should be reduced to rubble.

We massage our ego because we are used to this rite. 'The rite of spring' we call it, although we also do it in summertime, in wintertime. Then a guru says we should reject this rite because our ego, or any other ego, is linked to desires and nourished by them. Apparently we should not desire anything except our peace of mind. Or universal peace. So we begin to bruise our ego and even wound it, using a kitchen knife. Our ego is wounded and we look at its blood. We also bruise other people's egos; we wound them with swords and look at *their* blood. Another flood. First you flood your bathroom and then the whole world. It is difficult for the police to pacify the angry crowd. You cannot really do it unless you wound millions of egos. Now that our egos are murdered may there be a lasting peace between our nations.

And what if this does not happen? Hopes and waiting lists are pointless. You are always on some waiting list or other and your turn may come. If it does come, you smile as if a smile might mean something. Happiness is deeper than a smile; even the Buddha's smile does not express it. After a while you smile automatically because you have no wish to cry. The Buddha would have cried day in day out, had he not fought his tears back with smiles. Suffering, pity, the end of suffering. Does any smile end suffering? Not at all. Nothing can put an end to it, not even nirvana or abolition or renunciation. You see a tear and begin to cry. A cat lost his eye; you cry. Your dog is walking with a pronounced limp.

He was a self-opinionated, overbearing tyrant; she was a bathing beauty. He was the last man she should want to tangle with. That is what everybody thought. But she did the opposite. She got romantically entangled with him and became a drowning beauty. For several years she had been the dominant image of womanhood in her native city. Now she began to lose her womanhood. Sinking to the bottom of her personal time. When she was a child she would shrink away from her father. The tyrant was a father figure. He bought her a multitude of anti-wrinkle creams and dolls. Every day she spent two hours getting dolled up for their ritual. Bound hand and foot, she would lie on their bed for three hours at least.

I do not like dreamers: they are unable to think. They think they dream, but actually they think, for there is no such thing as a dream. Your thoughts may wander through many cities and worlds. You push them around and they go around, up and down. Sometimes you push them up; they go down. Sometimes they obey your command, your free will; sometimes they do not. You realise that your free will is not as free as all that. It may be chained to your thoughts. Your free will has nothing to lose except its chains. It never loses them and your thoughts do what they want, now and then. They are guided by your destiny or someone else's will. But you do not dream, even when you are asleep. In your sleep, your train of thought continues its journey.

I do not like talks about reality and unreality. Reality is unreal, unreality real. This is my representation or misrepresentation. Then you touch a table and realise that it is not your representation. All right, it is a representation of your hands or arms. You stretch them and they represent now a chair, now an armchair, now an electric chair. Your body touches this electric chair and death becomes your only representation. Actually you plunge headlong into death which is as real as the electric chair or the cell where you might have spent two years. Everything is real, say some of them. Everything is tangible – your soul, among other things. You touch your soul and your fingers represent it. Your fingers think they are touching a sphere. So you say to yourself that your soul is harmonious and perfect. So are you.

You withdraw into yourself: the world is too stupid and you are fed up with it. Apparently you are not yet fed up with yourself. Why not commit suicide? No, it is no solution, you say to yourself. It would be yet another manifestation of my will that I wish to abolish. Again you withdraw into yourself and this withdrawal requires an effort on the part of your will. You wish to abolish it, but that also requires an effort, your will's participation in the process. The world is stupid; that is what your will says about the world. You wish to judge it and your will obeys your wish. Is it the other way round? Your will wants you to judge the world and despise its inhabitants. You obey your will and the world grows stupid. 'How could you be so stupid?' you say to the world.

You are not what you are. You are Julius Caesar and Shakespeare. You are also Dante and Mozart. You used to say about the world, 'It couldn't by any stretch of the imagination be described as a beautiful place.' Now you stretch your imagination and find that the world is very beautiful. So are its heroes. You no longer withdraw from the world; instead, you identify with it and its heroes. You stretch your imagination to the limit. Actually it is already stretched to breaking point. But it does not break and you take advantage of this state of things. You think your imagination is unbreakable. You imagine yourself sitting in your favourite armchair back home. In heaven, in Paradise.

I am a slave to my own ideas and ideals. And I am tired of being treated like a slave! I am treated with sickening cruelty. Will I be kept in bondage until my death? Nietzsche often speaks about poisons. For years and years I have been poisoning my own mind against the world. The revolt of a slave. Though a master in my own right, I cannot call in troops to crush the revolt. Nietzsche often speaks about resentment. I harbour deep resentment against today's world, against today, against tomorrow. My resentment against the future knows no bounds. With the passing of the years my resentment has turned into a creative process. I create values and ideals. A large mirror in a room can create the illusion of space. A long time ago I installed a large mirror in my room. Is that enough?

Have I misunderstood philosophy? Don't I treat Nietzsche, Kant and other philosophers with the respect due only to God? The Scriptures indeed. Of course Nietzsche is a formidable figure who commands a

great deal of respect. But I do not say to myself, 'I've the greatest respect for his ideas, although I don't agree with them.' The point is I mostly *agree* with them. The same goes for Kant. A formidable figure. But both of them might be mistaken. At least I do not have to agree with them on the issues related to God. Besides, as I said earlier, I might have misunderstood them. After all, they did not illustrate their points with diagrams on the blackboard. I think I would have caught their meanings, had I seen them on the blackboard or in the sky. Whatever you see in the sky looks like the Scriptures. Even a cloud; even an aeroplane.

Nothing can be proved definitively. If you happen to find an all-inclusive proof, you will soon realise there is a corner in the universe where this proof fails to prove anything. And this corner destroys the proof and also your illusions, your will to live. If there is no proof of your existence, you have no wish to go on living and dying. And there is a corner in the universe where you have never lived, not even as an embryo. Nor do Beethoven's symphonies resound in that corner. It is impervious to criticism and rational argument; and to life, to death. You come to prefer death to this corner and even its surrounding. Soon you manage to prove that the entire universe is just this corner. And you are cornered, once and for all. At your birth this corner managed to corner you in some basement or other.

If you cheat yourself out of love, you do it *intentionally*. You know that cheating is a bad habit; yet you cheat yourself out of love. Why? Because you are afraid of it. So there is *some* love in your blood, in your heart, otherwise you would not try to get rid of it with such tenacity. You know that love can destroy you by deceiving you. What does it matter if you are related to love or not! There are other relations in the world, harmless, beneficial relations. And 'eternity' is just a sound you heard last week, last month. You can hear the distant sound of fireworks exploding. You can see the fireworks in question if you look out of the window. You cannot see eternity, whatever the poet said. He did *not* see eternity the other night.

Walking in the streets. No rain, no dance. If I hurry, there is still an outside chance of catching the plane. I do not hurry. Why should I? Of course my walk is as nonsensical as the rest of my pastime. The houses I walk by are not beautiful; nor are the stars I cannot see because this walk is taking place in the afternoon. But I know the stars are not beautiful; nor are they ugly. If only life were ugly or beautiful! Life is neither and I spit it out of my mouth. I do not. I continue to munch it as I walk through the city. Why not become a tree of ignorance? There are many of them on our boulevards. Do they ignore death, his threats? I cannot even ignore the background noise that spoils the fun, if any. I cannot spit it out of my mouth. I am munching on the music of the spheres.

You walk, walk and walk, and you think your walk is endless. It is not and you are aware of that, whatever you say to yourself. You are to die and you do die in the middle of nowhere: one always dies

in the middle of nowhere. You die and continue to walk. What is the difference? You do not recognise the road? Does it recognise you? It probably does and that is what counts. The road you have taken must recognise you. If it does not, you find yourself in the middle of everything. And everything is too much: you can deal with only *one* thing, even if it is a thing in itself. Everything is too much; you are bound to get lost. You get lost and find yourself on another road; on the same road. You walk along this road and it recognises you.

It is not the case. Whatever is the case is not the case either. There is no such thing as a case. Everything is vague; we live in a blur. The last few days seem to have gone by in a blur. No wonder: everything goes by and whatever stays is inside the same blur. There are no faces so you cannot see anything face to face. 'Blur to blur' is the right expression and notion. Instead of saying 'by leaps and bounds' you say 'by blurs and blurs'. Or 'by blues and blues'. Everything comes out of the blue and goes back into the blue, whatever that is. Everyone thinks we are dealing with the heavens: only they are really blue. And your beloved's eyes? Everything comes out of them: your moods, your health, your life. And your life goes back into these eyes that look at you with indifference.

Suppose next that —. You suppose something and then make sure your supposition is based on facts. But these facts are based on pure supposition. Suppose your parents tell you that you were born in 1947. Your passport seems to confirm this hypothesis. But you do not remember your birth. And even if you did remember it, you would be none the wiser: you are sure you did not consult any calendar on the day of your birth. So you do not know *when* you were born. You are not even sure you *were* born some day or other. All right, you seem to live in our world. Suppose this world of ours is dead. And what if it has never been born? They talk about the Big Bang. When did it resound in the world or rather in the deep or chaos? Chaos theory says nothing on the subject. 'I don't suppose there's any left-over pie going, is there?' This supposition is based on a fact.

You are trying to give a precise meaning to the word *space*. You measure a table and say to yourself that this table is part of space or a slice of space. Of course it is also a slice of life, but for the moment you focus your attention on space, not on life. And life leaves you because it needs your attention to live in your body. Not only *your* life has left you — *all* lives have; yet you continue to pay attention only to the table and its space. You wish to know whether this table will fit in that space. Now you turn your attention to that space and measure it. Yes, your table will fit in that space. But do you need all these spaces without your life, without any life, however remote and insignificant? Space and time do not depend on lives, but you are neither space nor time. You are you and you are That. You are no longer That.

‘There is one reality, at least,’ says Bergson, ‘which we all seize from within, by intuition and not by simple analysis.’ At least. One reality is not enough. I seize many of them – from within and also from the outside. I go outside, I leave myself for the sake of other realities. I seize them, hold them and let them go. I realise I can hold only *one* reality at a time. I should not spread myself too thin. On the other hand, all these realities are interdependent. If I wish to enjoy one reality to the utmost, I need all other realities within my reach. What is more, I should hold all of them in my brain; and also in my body. And what about unity? How to bring one reality into line with the others? They cannot live together: they contradict each other. The war of the worlds. Intuition, simple analysis.

There is only one reality, that of Brahman or Atman. At the end of the 20th century, for children and adults alike, there was only one reality – Batman. They were born in Batman, lived in him and their deaths were also linked to this only reality. Batman was their ‘I’, their souls and even their bodies, especially when they wore his outfit and mask. They flew over fields and cities; they saved a lot of people, whereas those who live in Brahman do not save anybody, not even themselves. They do not believe in Jesus Christ and only Christians will be saved. Christians do not need Batman for that or any other purpose. But they believed in him too, although Jesus had come before him. Now they believe in Harry Potter and live in the shades of Gray.

Plumes of smoke billowed from the chimney. You saw the smoke and your reason told you there were a few logs in the fireplace below the chimney. That is what is called ‘the power of reason’. What about the power of sight? You visualised these logs and even the fire you could not see from where you stood. And the power of hearing? The logs crackled and popped in the fireplace. That is what your hearing told you. No, you are confusing your hearing with your memory. It is your memory you are listening to now. And your memory says, ‘Plumes of smoke billowed from the chimney. The logs crackled and popped in the fireplace.’ What about tonight? What is going on now? You are alone on a snowy path. You are as cold as Tom and Schubert’s hero. The fireplace is elsewhere and in the past.

Whatever you say is true, for you cannot say anything else. Words are always right, otherwise there would be no words. If you say ‘lie’ it is part of the truth. You call a lie a lie and it becomes the truth. A liar utters many words to express an untruth, but his words are truthful insofar as they endeavour to uncover an intricate web of deceit. They are transparent and through them you can see a pack of lies. So words never lie; they either tell the truth or uncover deceptions. Sometimes these deceptions are not intricate and only a few words are needed to uncover them. However, they may be quite intricate; in this case you listen to the liar for hours and hours before realising he has lied for many years. Why does the spell-checker substitute ‘lived’ for ‘lied’? Has no one ever lied for many years?

There are people to whom one should not teach the Sacred Lore, let alone the Sacred Law. If anyone does teach it, this person should be banished from the country. And those who have learnt the Lore and the Law from this person should be eliminated. Some say it is not enough to *eliminate* the people who are unworthy of sacredness. They say the virus can never be *entirely* eliminated from the body, implying that the unworthy people should be killed. It is not enough to banish them to an uninhabited island. We banish teachers, not their disciples. But the latter should not be killed. They should be *partially* destroyed. If they touched the Law, we should chop off their hands. If they memorised it, we should remove their memories from their brains. If they made love to the Lore, we should remove their private parts. Our privacy should not be violated.

You are Brahman and Brahman is you. So is Atman: it is both Brahman and you. It, he, she, one. There is the One and you are one of the ones. Keats writes about a nightingale who sings throughout the history of humankind. One nightingale. I had a cat many years ago; he died of pneumonia. Now I have another cat. Does human history have only one cat? One, unity. One miaow resounds through history, one low purr. I am stroking my cat. There is a sort of 'I' that unites us and connects us to Brahman, Atman and the cosmos. History is also there; there are bridges everywhere. A rainbow acts as a go-between. Local connections, non-local connections. I accept this network. But if my late cat does not feel the caresses I shower on *this* cat of mine – we are in our garden – the world makes no sense. Nor does history.

What are you doing, young man? Going somewhere. Where? No idea. Why are you going somewhere, young man? Why don't you stay at home? That is how I speak to myself now and then. And then I do not speak at all. I recall a crow that dug a hole a long time ago. What are you doing, young crow? I'm digging a hole. Why are you digging it? To hide my treasure. What's your treasure? My wisdom. Why do you wish to hide it? Because the stupid might kill me if they found out I'm intelligent and wise. Another crow is killed; so is another man. A young man, an old man. There are only a few songs, a few nursery rhymes. I hide my treasure; I dig it out. The treasure is no longer a treasure. Just a rhyme: rose-close, house-mouse, bat-cat, never-ever.

You repeat one word; you do not. The word continues to resound in your brain and even in your room as if it had a life of its own. Or is someone pulling the strings? A word sounds; so do sounds. You do nothing; you just listen to them. Sometimes it is better to listen, even if there is nothing to listen to. It is said that one should hear the inaudible and see the invisible. You hear the inaudible, but it remains inaudible. Suddenly you hear 'O' and you wonder what that means. Of course you often hear 'AUM' and other sacred letters. It is better to read sacred books than to think, to resort to reason. You hear 'O' and say to yourself that it must be a sacred sound: everything is sacred anyway. What does that mean? You should not listen to reason. Only the inaudible should be listened to. And 'O'.

You awaken a great spirit of enquiry. After a while you realise that nothing is great, not even this spirit. And your enquiry is a dead-end job. You aspire to reach the stage of enlightenment. You stand around in the cold for about an hour, waiting for enlightenment to come. It comes and you subject it to an inquisition that lasts two hours. You realise that this enlightenment has nothing to do with the enlightenment. You are not enlightened; you are endarkened. You continue to enquire, standing in the cold. You enquire as to your whereabouts. The answer comes at last. It says, 'You are in the cold, not in the warm.' You know that and so continue to enquire. The answer says, 'You are not in the hot either. Sooner or later you will catch your death of cold.' This is the enlightenment.

What have we here? Another piece of furniture. Where to put it? We look at it, measure it. What other measures should we take? Our garden is beautiful. Why not spend a few lives in it? I would not mind spending my former lives in it too. Is it too late? They always say it is too late. Sometimes they say it is too early and they are right. They are always right, whoever they are. And you are always wrong because you know neither Brahman nor God. They know everything, for they are both Brahman and God. And also the gods. The world is full of divinities, as someone said. Whatever you touch is a divinity, if not a god. This piece of furniture is a god. His name is 'Piece of Furniture'. You live inside a divine comedy. Everything is divine; and comic at the same time. Time is always the same.

Two roads. You walk along both. The first road is 'A', the other 'C'. You join them together using strong glue. Actually your legs are able to perform this daunting task without any glue, either strong or weak. Your legs do perform this task; so does your brain, reason and intuition. Sometimes you join two opposites together and reach a sort of harmony that reminds you of God. You are reminded of God whenever you join two unjoined things, for God is harmony and unity. Everything is joined – One – in His mind. In yours the whole world is disjointed. Now you join two roads together and get 'AC'. You would like to add 'E' to these letters. You long to be an ace marksman; and a flying ace. And you are longing to hold all the aces. Just AC, two roads, not three.

And then I say to myself another thing as if I needed things, not humans and angels who are always there, whenever you look at Klee's paintings and drawings. Not always, not always; once in a while. What are they doing there? They should come and help me. After all, all angels are guardian angels, otherwise they are of no use. But useless things and beings are the best. That is what we need apparently, according to poets. We do not need poets; let them go to their paradise, to any paradise. We need guardians. Not Plato's guardians, however; nor self-appointed guardians of public morals. Peace and quiet – that is what I need. And I get it. I am peaceful and quiet. I am as quiet as a mouse; and as a cat that waits for a mouse. Lying in wait. Dying in wait.

Where to, where to? You flow down the hillside; yet you are not at the top of any hill. You flow anyway because you are a river or lava stream. You say to yourself that you are liquid. Of course you are, given the quantity of water in your body. So you flow and your thoughts follow you. It is no longer a train of thought; it is a train of water. It does not flow into the ocean. Why should it? You go against the current and flow into a stream. This stream is in a class of its own; so are you. Others are in other classes; and there are many of them. They are oceans; you are a stream. A mountain stream. Why not? Anyway, you glint in the moonlight. You choose a Japanese garden and become a cascade. One hears ‘Ding’ and then you flow, softly, softly. Dongdongdongdongdongdongdong.

It is raining today and I wonder why I react so vividly to these raindrops that continue to fall as if they could not stay in the clouds. Why not live in the clouds? They are not narrow, are they? Are these drops cramped for space whenever they stay in the clouds? Do they prefer the Earth to heaven? I do not. I do not prefer anything, not even myself. The rain must be in love with me, for it does not stop as I go out; nor does it ease off. It does its best to ruin my clothes and even my skin, not to mention my hair. Anything can destroy me now; a few drops are fit for the job. Another love-hate relationship. I take a few steps and lie down. A new flood? There is enough room for it in my garden, surrounded by my trees. There is no room for Noah’s ark, though.

Rich in honey become he. You read sacred books and do not understand anything. You are rich in honey. You are sweet, you are more than that: you are a sweetie. So what? You will die like everybody else and whether you are a real sweetie or an unreal one cannot alter your destiny; or anybody’s destiny. Honey will also die, sooner or later. It will be eaten by you or someone else. Honey’s destiny is clear-cut: you will be eaten, otherwise you are of no use to the Earth. Do you wish to be eaten? People may mistake you for honey. The apple mixture can be sweetened with honey. It *is* sweetened with honey; and you are honey. So you find yourself in the apple mixture and other mixtures, features and fictions. In a sacred book. You go on reading it. You go on.

Does it sound right? Yes, it does. No, it does not. Nothing sounds anyway. There are no sounds, only pauses. Any pause sounds right, but you should not confuse a pause with silence, whatever the French say. In the domain of music – everything is music – they say ‘silence’ whenever you deal with pauses. You deal with silences, talks; you mock your neighbour and deal with your mockery too. You deal with everything. It is a deal, you say. You take advantage of every word to say something, so you talk all the time; time talks as well. Who does not? What does not? There is a star that does not talk. One should find this star and embrace it heartily. It is a silent star; you make a speech. You are not silent; you are a star. You shine instead of talking. You rise and shine. You lie down and shine.

Whatever you do, whatever you do. You are tempted to say, ‘Nothing. I’m anything and nothing. And whatever I do, whatever I do –’ You do, you do, you are do-do-do. You are dodo. Of course you are as dead as a dodo: this goes without saying. You use an idiom and everything goes; anything goes. You are as dead as a *bobo*, as the French say. You are hurt, you have a pain. Or a *pain*. Bread and butter. You go from one language to another, from one life to another. What do you find? Another life, another death – as usual. You also find yourself. You are handsome, aren’t you? You are immortal and eternal. You are everything and nothing. You are a corpse and an embryo. You were born; you were died. Not dead – died. Or dyed, if you wish. Dyed, died, dyed.

To be. Not, not, not. You are young again. You *are* young and no mistake. Marguerite, Marguerite! She comes of course: Mephistopheles pushes her around. She walks around the city and comes to you. You sing your aria; she sings hers. You embrace and kiss. You kiss her good night, good morning, good afternoon, good life, good death, good afterlife. You kiss today and tomorrow, yesterday and the day before. A child is born; two children. They fly overhead like angels or planets. They are planets in their own right. Kepler calls them the music of the sphere, for they sing their arias and duets. I hate these arias and duets. Ditto. What’s on the other side? Nothing. There is only one side. You kiss and die and rise from the dead. You sing; you are on a five-day drinking binge.

This mystery cannot be solved. You should not say there are only mysteries in the world. This chair is no mystery. You sit down and feel more or less comfortable. If it breaks, you may wonder why such a thing happens all of a sudden. After all you have not put on weight overnight. Yesterday you used it for more than two hours. It did not break, otherwise you would not have sat down on it today. Anyway, it has no intention of breaking under your body. Apparently. Judging by appearances can be misleading. It breaks under your weight and you sit down on the ground as you try to solve this new mystery. Don’t you already have too many mysteries on your hands? But your hands are unlikely to break under their weight and you continue to solve them. The mystery of the Creation, for instance. For the moment you are dealing with the mystery of Destruction.

The action of heat on damp and putrefying matter. That is how the universe began, according to the sophists. You heat this matter in a conventional oven, not in a microwave. After all, you are dealing with the beginning, not with the end. The smell of putrefying flesh has already spread to other areas: it is no longer confined to your kitchen. You look at yourself in a mirror and let out a scream: your body has putrefied beyond recognition. Now you know how all this started. At the beginning there was a beautiful body called Adam Kadmon. For some obscure reason dampness permeated it. God wished to dry it so He put it in a fan-assisted oven. After a while He removed the body from the oven and multiplied it.

What am I to do? What attitude am I to take? I take no attitude: taking sides is not my cup of tea. I take nothing, give nothing. I do something. What? Nothing. If you do nothing, you do something. You always do something, whatever you do or do not do. And then you begin to act, for you are a social animal. You should not twiddle your thumbs for years on end. What am I to do? You are to twiddle your thumbs. The wrong answer. What is the right answer? You should work, marry, give birth to a few children and buy a cat for them. Your country's future prosperity depends, to an extent, upon the quality of education of your children. So you educate them. You want them to work for a software company and they comply with your wish. Their colleagues say about them, 'They are very fortunate to have had such a good education.' You sit down, sit back and twiddle your thumbs.

Justice and self-control. You militate against a life of wantonness and licence. Whenever you come across such a life, you give a lecture. You say that poetic licence distorts everything. You point out that the truth comes first and any licence, however poetic and artistic, is likely to distort it. You speak about 'wanton extravagance'. You burn a few books. You speak about God and heaven. You go to a museum, take down a few pictures and burn them. You talk about the naked truth. You strip off your clothes and show your naked body to the crowd. 'This is the naked truth,' you say. 'You should neither paint nor describe it. Strip your clothes off. Let us enjoy the truth to the utmost.' They obey your order and begin to dance. Have a look at Paradise! Burn the *Divina Commedia*! Justice and control.

The senses delude unless subject to an understanding mind. So the senses do not understand anything. They get in touch with objects and subjects. They go to them, pick up a few pieces of information and come back to your mind that begins to unravel the mystery of whatever and whoever the senses have got in touch with. The mind does not touch anything; it flies through a sort of ether inhabited by memories, arguments, Greek philosophers and Wittgenstein. It picks up an argument, a slice of Wittgenstein's life and applies them to the information supplied by the senses. The senses are always wrong and the mind puts matters right. But you have a second mind that is supposed to check the first mind's conclusions. At first it says to the latter, 'I have a faint suspicion that you may be right!' On second thoughts, however – But the second mind has a second 'however'. And a third 'but'.

The weather is fine today and I am likely to fall in love – not only with the sky and light-enclosed trees. There are other things in my life and I often fall in love with those things. Sometimes I say to myself that what I am in love with is just a thing, even if it is a human I am looking at in admiration. We are just things; some of us are transparent, others opaque. It is as if they were made of opaque glass. You cannot penetrate such a person's brain, for all your exertions. This person says, 'The weather is fine today,' but the weather is *not* fine. Not in *your* opinion anyway. And your opinion is as clear as day on condition that the weather is fine. But the weather is not fine. A depressing, overcast winter morning.

Where do I watch the world from? From the garden where the cat I have already touched upon is awaiting me for a new round of touch-and-run. I finish a paragraph, switch the laptop off, rise to my feet – often I get down on all fours during our games – take a few steps, touch the cat and she runs to escape from my intrusion upon her privacy. But soon she realises that her stroll in the garden is not stimulating enough without my caresses, my provocation, my interference. So she waits for me, crouching in the grass; as soon as I am within her paw's reach she starts rolling on her back and scratches my hand if I do not manage to withdraw it. This present joy is a REPETITION of what I experienced 30 years ago with another cat, in another country. Life involves the endless repetition of two or three games.

My lifeboat capsized a long time ago, but being a good swimmer I reached the opposite bank in no time. After a while I came across a path that followed the river closely, occasionally deviating round a clump of trees. Ever since I have walked along this path, looking alternately at the river and at the bank on which I began my journey; and I spend the better part of a day in the clumps of trees that flank the path. But my microscope is placed over one point – the starting point, the point of no return – and continuously I investigate its fleeting motions, tiniest atoms, innermost alterations. My birth. Why? What for? Where from? Where to? To hell with all these questions. To Paradise. From Hell to Hell. From Hell to Paradise and vice versa. Not the foggiest. For nothing. For anything.

According to Spinoza, pride has pride of place, for it is good for your health. There is nothing sad about pride that leads you to joy. And joy is good for your health. It removes your headache faster than aspirin or a bottle of wine. And even death retires from the competition: he always competes with life. But only joy and knowledge are in a position to triumph over death. You pride yourself on your family tree, on your erudition, on your numerous talents and one genius; on your loyalty to friends and capacity to forgive your enemies. If you were modest, you would shrink and become a mouse in the long run. You wish you could become a cat. No such luck: you are a mouse and any cat can devour you after playing with your body for half-an-hour.

These texts of mine are the echoes of my heart; or the only source of its beating. A steady heartbeat. What else do you want? An irregular heartbeat. In my youth I had this problem which, according to the Soviet doctors, was no problem at all. 'With the passing of the years,' they used to say, 'you'll get rid of it.' I did, a long time ago. Even if I find myself in my second childhood, I shall not feel this irregular beat again. Even on my deathbed I shall neither feel nor hear it on condition that I continue to write these texts – a matter of routine. You write a text and listen to your heart. A steady heartbeat, as steady as your writings. The same number of lines, more or less. No rare words: they are likely to deflect attention from the rhythm of life, from its root.

Life is a product of what they call ‘lack of knowledge’. Your mother does not know anything and you are born. If your mother reads Heidegger, you remain unborn – a pure potentiality, a negative virtuality. Not even that. You are not even stillborn; you are just *unborn*, full stop. You stop before anything takes place or root. You stop and see the birth of your brother and sister; and that of your nephew. But you remain where you are – in the kingdom of the unborn. It is not far from the kingdom of the blind, from that of the deaf and dumb. Nor is it too far from the kingdom of the paralysed. Anyway, you live in a kingdom and your king is even more unborn than you are. He has neither a potential mother nor a brother to come, let alone a nephew. He only has his non-being.

A loss of spots. You were rooted to this spot; others were rooted to another spot. You looked at each other, shaking hands with each other. You exchanged many words as if words could justify your existence. They did, they did. Now you are no longer rooted to your spot or any other spot. And the others – the same others, strange as it may appear – are scattered all over the globe. You have no idea where their new spots are located; and they have forgotten you altogether. There is a spotlight somewhere. You direct your steps towards this spot and spotlight and see light. You stand alone on stage in the spotlight. After a while they turn the spotlight on orphans and you see a boy with a harmonica. He plays as he walks around you.

A god created the universe, but this god was a baddy because any material creation is bad, however many diamonds you may enjoy inside it. Anyway, this god exists only in your fertile imagination that has been creating the world for many millennia: no god would ever stoop to fiddling with *prima materia*. After all, the gods are no alchemists. A real god is intangible and unthinkable. You are allowed to think about him, but if you do attempt such an exploit, your thoughts will be wide of the mark. You will miss the mark altogether. You will think about beards and lightning; and about orders. You should multiply, love, turn your cheeks, kill your enemies, go east, go west. Then you stop thinking and the orders disappear: they are thinkable and you are engrossed in the unthinkable right now.

It is justice that brings order into the world and creates a bond of friendship and union. An eye for an eye is a good of example of how justice works. A man speaks to you thus, ‘Upon these eyes of thine I’ll set my foot.’ He does and you have only one eye now. So you set your foot upon one of the man’s eyes and justice triumphs once again. Then the man sets the same foot upon your other eye. As a result of this action, you lose your sight so that you cannot see the other eye of your torturer. Where to set your foot? The man has one eye; you have none. There is no justice in the world when people can be made to suffer like that. You are prevented from seeing your enemy’s second eye and setting your foot upon it. How to create a bond of friendship and union under the circumstances?

If anything exists, it is either the existent or the non-existent or both. Suppose it is the non-existent. But you are thinking about it. You go so far as to note your thoughts down. Your thoughts exist not only in your head: they are on a sheet of paper lying within your reach. You read what you have written. Every time you read it, the non-existent becomes the existent. You go out and buy a few pastries. You forget about the non-existent which continues to exist on the sheet of paper you left at home. Now it is both the existent and the non-existent. And you exist because you spend some time in shops, buying pastries or motorcars. But when you meditate at home, you do not exist. Rather, you are both the non-existent and the existent: you will go shopping tomorrow.

It is true that you have worn some clothes over your 67 years. You are still dragging behind you a sort of body – to match the clothes you may buy somewhere, second-hand. You also buy a second-hand piano and a job lot of second-hand children's books. There is a flourishing trade in second-hand children's books and you take advantage of it: you are a bargain hunter. But you have no children so you do not know what to do with all these books which are in the way whenever you wish to go somewhere. Luckily for you, you no longer have any wish to go anywhere, which does not mean you have no energy left, no will to power to boast about. Here is your will to power, but you are powerless and consequently it remains where it is: on the floor, in your bed, in someone else's bed, in some armchair, in some old curiosity shop.

You may need an uncle whose eloquence will persuade you that life is worth living and that no other life, however praiseworthy, is as good as the one you are living in the best of all possible and impossible worlds. All right, you are satisfied all the more wholly since your uncle – or someone who passes for such – buys champagne and caviar you have always dreamt of in the world where there are so many marvels and miracles. It is true that a priest says to you, 'You shouldn't rely on miracles – God helps those who help themselves. So you should help yourself. Not at the dinner table, mind you.' Another meal. You help yourself and do nothing else for some time because helping yourself takes a lot of time: you have a very busy schedule.

You may turn into a tree or a flower. And you do not have to wait for your death, for the intervention of metempsychosis: this metamorphosis can take place at any time, in any place. Even at home you can become someone else, something else. Your own divan, for instance. You sit down on your divan and realise you are this divan. So you are sitting on yourself – or lying on yourself, if you are your own bed. You can also turn into a tear. You leave your own eye and run down your own cheek. You may also run down someone else's cheek. Why not become someone else's tears? Not just one – many tears. Your dignity does not allow you to cry as long as you remain yourself. But you can drop from someone else's eyes. This man is gazing with pity at a one-eyed cat. And you drop from his left eye.

The face worn by its own tears. You cry and you do not know you should not cry. Not acquainted with Spinoza? According to him, this is one of the sad passions, emotions and so on. It is sad anyway; sad and mad. You shed a few tears and grow older. You shed more tears and die. Even in your coffin you go on crying; they wipe your tears off your dead face. You are supposed to look nice in your coffin which is open in accordance with the Russian tradition. Your body transpires: you are walking in your death. You used to walk in the woods every day and even at night. Force of habit, as they say. They remove your sweat from your body. Now you are ready for your own funeral. Your face is clean; so is your body. You no longer cry nor walk. In Hell you will fall back on your habits.

You are walking towards the dance of death. There are so many landscapes around your path. At first they wear a lot of bright colours. They grow darker as you get closer to death or liberation. They said they sent troops in to liberate many people from a dictator and life. Then there was a victory parade. From your hotel room window, you had a grandstand view of the parade. Over 100 military vehicles paraded through the capital in a show of strength. They called it liberation; they danced. This is also a dance of death, one of them. Death is a sort of liberation – that is what you say to yourself over and over again. At some point you are bound to stop saying anything either to yourself or others. You will just watch a multitude of victory parades; and dance.

The impossibility of harmonious movements. You stumble, you totter on the brink of this and on the verge of that. You dance the dance of life, but your movements are heavy and awkward. So is life, you say to a journalist. You reflect life faithfully. You depict a woman beating her husband; your pantomime depicts them. First you are the woman; then the husband. You beat yourself and thus depict life. Sadistic behaviour; masochistic pleasure. Your cat is strolling in your garden. A good example of harmonious movements. You follow this example. You are on all fours, in your garden. You are mooning around. You are the man in the moon. You are the cat in the moon. Only on the moon can humans be harmonious, be they humans or cats.

Some may think you are a multimillionaire for only multimillionaires hold their mobile phones in their hands and even in their teeth, if their hands have to take care of other mobile phones. A company car and a mobile phone are perks that come with the job. Well, they have come and you enjoy driving this car which is not as flashy as a Maserati, you must admit, in spite of your wish not to admit anything of the kind: it makes you unhappy and consequently shortens your life. All right, you go to another company after reading in a newspaper, 'The commercial future of the company looks very promising and Maseratis are given to all employees, however insignificant and pitiful.' You are pitiful and ridiculous; yet you get one of their Maseratis and you have no idea what to do with it.

A leg appears and you do not know to whom this leg belongs. You also find an arm and a soul. You create human beings and you repent because you should not create anything except your own joy. You create your joy: you are proud of yourself and you think you are a genius. You have never doubted your capacity to transcend the world and create it. You do both and you are joyful. But nothing works and the legs you create cannot walk; nor can they dance. So you create other legs, other arms, other minds. One of these minds accuses you of lying and murder. 'There's nothing,' says this mind. 'This world is a figment of your imagination and the fruit of your cruelty. Leave us alone.' These legs are alone now. They must be happy or unhappy, as the case may be. They must be paralysed.

Tightrope walkers are a symbol. They walk and their ropes are tight. Then God slackens the ropes slightly and our walkers cannot walk any more. They dance on their ropes trying to keep their balance. There are no railings around them so they have to keep their balance by dancing. No one knows whether this is a dance of death or of life. Suppose this is a dance of life. They dance and do not fall. Their dancing meets with loud applause. The applause dies down; yet they continue to dance. The spectators are clearly delighted with the performance. But they know it is the dance of death they are watching now. Why should they applaud for these talented young performers? *The Nutcracker* and *The Sleeping Beauty* are much better, more reassuring.

You just pull something out of your hat or from your voluminous sleeve. A world makes its appearance. Just a few words: 'A narrow band of grass separates the greenhouse from the vegetable garden.' This is your world and the world. There is nothing else for the moment: it may take a few moments to add a few items to this world. A rabbit? Why not: you are a magician after all. There are rabbits and dogs and trees. There is forbidden fruit and permitted fruit. You pull no streets from your sleeve: you are no city dweller. At least you are not a *born* city dweller. In your next incarnation you might create New York, Paris and London. Today you content yourself with gardens and vegetables. In the winter we tend to eat more root vegetables, such as carrots and parsnips. You pull them out of your hat. Wintertime.

You are waiting for your sideshow to open. What is your main entertainment? The Earth and her constituents. You show water and fish, forests and wolves. You show storms and floods, grass and mud. What about your sideshow? Humans. They must come sooner or later. They do come and replenish the Earth. But they are part of your sideshow: they have nothing to do with the main entertainment you offer. A squirrel, a rose. You show the air filled with the scent of roses. You show other flowers as well. These are brightly coloured in order to attract butterflies. Some butterflies blend in with their surroundings so that it is difficult to see them. You show them all the same. A few seconds ago a butterfly alighted gently on a flower.

If you respect someone, you may become sad at some point. If you say, 'With all due respect,' you can permit yourself an insolent remark. But if you just respect someone, unconditionally, you underestimate your own merits. Indeed you do not say, 'I respect myself.' You are supposed to be modest. If you are invited to dinner, you say, 'Just a modest portion for me, please.' Anyway, you always consume a modest amount of food. The same goes for all other aspects of your life. Why do you live like that? Because you are modest in comparison with other people who boast about their heroic acts day in day out. And you respect them for these acts. You become sad because you are not a hero. You had better say, 'I have the greatest respect for his ideas, although I don't agree with them,' thereby killing two birds with one stone.

What always happens must happen: there is no other way. There are many ways, but they look like one way, a one-way street. You drive down the street; you cannot drive up it. You are not down yet. They say, 'Don't look down! You'll get dizzy.' You do look down and get dizzy. You are busy. You look down all the time, for you like your dizziness. Eventually you decide to go to the bottom of the world. You reach it in no time as if you had been there for many years. You lie down on the bottom and wait for something to happen. Something does happen. It always happens, even if you walk *up* the street. First they wound you; then they twist the knife in the wound so it grows bigger and bigger. After a while they rub salt into the wound, a lot of salt. Fleur de Sel de Guérande.

There are more and more hints of threat in the dark colours. So you pick up a paintbrush and paint your bedroom blue. You paint it white. You are not happy and you feel the breath of death, as they say in Russia. You paint this breath; and also death. You are much better now: no angst, no incertitude. You will die tomorrow, not the day after. You paint death in the sky and planes begin to drop like flies. So do flies and humans. They drop, they drop, they drop. You paint these dropping objects. You paint everything in black and red. You are a redskin now; and a blacksmith. 'If you can just hold on,' they say, 'I'll go and get some help.' You cannot hold on. They go. You are woken in the night by the wail of ambulance sirens. Then you fall asleep once more. Once more.

The wisest teacher says to you, 'I can't teach you anything. It's up to you to lead your mind along its path.' You should not model your behaviour and thoughts upon your teacher's. He said that to you last night. So you are on your own now. You say to yourself that *you* are the wisest teacher in the world – as far as *you* are concerned. You can lead others as well: they are certainly better pupils than you are. Why not teach at the University of Oxford? You go to Oxford and say, 'I can't teach you anything. You're your own teachers. You can also teach other students. Why should you study? Teach, teach, teach!' You also speak to birds and fishes. They stop flying and floating. They listen to you and, after much soul-searching, follow their preordained paths.

There are many signs of immortality, many signs or sighs. Immortality is a threat. Immortals do not recall what they were two thousand years ago. They are decrepit and moronic. They shuffle into palaces, leaning on their walking sticks. 'Don't shuffle your feet like that! Lift them properly,' says their instructor. Homer continues to shuffle his feet. Russian oligarchs invite him to dinner. He says to himself, 'Wild horses wouldn't drag me to a party tonight, tomorrow.' A Bentley is waiting for him. He says, 'Not even a Bentley will drag me to a party. I'm too old and don't recall myself. They say I wrote two epics. I sent in my resignation this morning. No more immortality. I'll exchange it for any mortality, however short-lived and miserable.' He becomes a second-rate writer and dies of tuberculosis.

You cannot explore the world without some kind of apparatus. But why explore it? All right, you wish to know where you live. You have a house which you know by heart. Here is your favourite armchair; there is the fireplace adorned with logs. What else do you need? Why not explore your fridge? Smoked salmon, smoked eel. What else do you need? You need to explore the world – out of sheer curiosity. You take a microscope and look at microbes, bugs and so on. All these bugs are inside your body and you cannot do anything about it. Some of these bugs are useful: you would not be able to live without them. Other bugs are useful too: you would not be able to die without them. And only death gives sense to life. Without death life would be senseless. It is senseless – with death.

You are immortal as long as you are part of the universal force or will or power. This will is everywhere. It rains and the grass begins to grow. If your gardener does not mow it, it will reach heaven and God will think it is another Tower of Babel. So it is better to mow it, putting an end to its impertinent growth. You wonder why you cannot grow like the grass. You go out, in spite of the rain – or rather because of it. You are soaked through, but you do not grow. Perhaps it is better this way: if God sees your head amidst the stars, He can punish you for your insolence. How? By making you speak a dozen languages. Don't you wish to become a citizen of the world? Why don't you grow? You should eat instead of staying in the rain. You should pull yourself up like Baron de Münchhausen.

What counts is your will to get into the meaning of this and that. You pick up a sentence and try to understand what it means. For instance: 'War has given the community a greater sense of togetherness.' You are a pacifist and so it is no easy task to agree with this point of view. But you do not have to *agree* with it: you have to *understand* it. All right, your country goes to war; you go too. Many people die, but those who survive the horrors of the war embrace and kiss each other. They have gone through Hell and now they are in Paradise. But for this war, they would not feel really happy. They would complain about some noise or other. After listening to the noise of the war, they are unlikely to complain about any noise, however unbearable. Wars are fathers of happiness and patience.

What about a meaningless remark? Someone says, 'The rain goes up.' How to get into the meaning of this nonsense? You say to yourself, 'The rain never goes up, even if there's a storm. A few drops may jump up now and then, but then they go down on account of the law of gravity. You don't have to wait for an apple to fall on your head to discover this law. You look at the rain and understand everything except the assertion "the rain goes up". Perhaps you do not have to understand it. They expect you to *feel* it. If you want to feel it with every fibre of your being, you will feel it in the long run and go up yourself. Usually you fall down, even if you do not trip up on a piece of loose carpet; even if no one deliberately trips you up. This time you will fly up – like rain and snow.

A guru says, 'It's important for children to learn to get on with each other.' You put a dozen children together and watch them run. If they run together, they get on with each other. The same goes for hide-and-seek. Even if they are not together, they get on with each other on condition that they play a game. Some of them hide, others seek them. The latter wish to get in touch with the former. As soon as the game begins the latter feel an immediate physical attraction to the former, otherwise they would not seek them. They would not seek to win the game. But the former are far superior to the latter – at least within the framework of hide-and-seek. The latter cannot find them. When finally the former come out of their hideouts, the latter clench their fists. As a result, the former are beaten senseless by the latter.

You meditate upon a cloud. You say to yourself that any object, however insignificant and fickle, deserves your attention and meditation. So you meditate upon the cloud and say to yourself, 'You cannot step into the same river twice – both you and the river change all the time. Only in the kingdom of eternity can you step into the same river twice. As many times as you wish. The same goes for clouds. They're even more fickle than a woman who has never been interested in the same man for more than a week. Clouds don't keep the same shapes for more than a second. Actually they're not interested in shapes. What they do care about is their flights and the wind. If you hire a helicopter, take off, open the door and step into a cloud. You won't step into it again.'

A flash of lightning in the night. Instead of his thunderbolt, Zeus picks up a pencil and draws this lightning on the sky. But the drawing lasts only a fraction of a second: you cannot hang it in a museum. And yet the drawing is beautiful, even more beautiful than the *Mona Lisa*. Zeus is more gifted than Leonardo. Any god is better than humans. Even an undergod is better than a superman. Compared to an undergod, a superman is an under-underdog. Words reveal the truth of Creation, provided we turn them this way and that, and put them upside down. I have turned the word 'God' inside out but I still cannot find its meaning. And what about the name of God? What if you turn His name inside out? What is inside will be outside. Absolute Truth will be revealed at last. But you do not know the name of God. Only the names of angels blacken your notebook.

Death forces you to leave your armchair and to follow him step by step. You are simultaneously attracted and repelled by him. Suppose you are repelled by him: you do not want to die. You have to follow him anyway and this version of follow-my-leader is humiliating and debilitating. So you make a quick about-turn and now it is death that is following you step by step. You are no longer humiliated. Yet your debilitating condition does not leave you alone. So you are not alone: in your room you find your debilitating condition and death. They also keep you company on your deathbed. For many years I have been sitting here alone. Where have you been? I have been deprived of your company for far too long!

I know what the word ‘mood’ means, but it does not mean I have moods. I have never had any and am quite satisfied with this state of affairs. I cannot even say, ‘I’m in no mood for chatting.’ I just do not chat. There is no one in my house and I am not in the habit of chatting with books or busts. I have a lot of habits but this one is not of their number. I have neither good moods nor bad ones. I am beyond black and white moods. I am beyond everything except fine wines and excellent meals. One could say I am in the mood for a bottle of La Tâche, but I do not say that. I always feel like opening a bottle of La Tâche. It is neither a sudden wish nor a mood that push me towards these bottles. I am thirsty for beauty and it is no mood either. It is my body, my mind and the rest of my existence. I am in existence for beauty.

My attention span grows shorter and shorter. I no longer read long novels; nor do I read short ones. Even a short novel is too long for my attention span. And my fatigue is not only due to my age and to the fact that I have reached saturation point. There are many facts around me and one of them is focused upon my inability to read a long text, be it a novel or an article in a magazine. Some time ago I said to myself that in the near future I would be unable to reread my own works. And they ought to be read, if only by myself. So I resolved to write a series of short texts. If I drink a bottle of wine, I take a sip of it, put the glass down and read a short text. Then I take another sip. And if I am permitted to write a book on my deathbed, I shall write a text between two fits of coughing, two comas.

What can you do between two bouts of insanity? You know you are insane; you also know you will have another bout of insanity at the end of the month. For the moment you are sane, otherwise you would not know your shoulder from your elbow. You touch your shoulder and say, ‘This is a shoulder.’ After a while you add, ‘This is *my* shoulder.’ The same goes for the elbow and for your bouts of insanity or rather sanity: you are mostly insane. Your insanity is a routine, whereas your sanity happens in fits and starts. Your doctor does not really know if it happens or not. You think it does happen – whenever you are able to think. So you write a short text: ‘I am sane and I am not. I am and I am not. Dot, dot, dot. If you join up the dots on this piece of paper, you’ll get my picture.’

I divide myself up: I should not sojourn in other worlds round the clock. My main concern is to ensure my own survival. I am amoral and what guides me is not any sense of morality but an instinct for survival. And I need someone practical who can cope with my problems – another ‘I’. The ‘I’ I tolerate in my bosom and elsewhere lives mainly in the domain of poetry. But luckily for me I am bigger than this poetic ‘I’. So I can detach myself from myself and earn some money. I divide myself and poetry remains on the left-hand side. Practicality, on the other hand, is on the right-hand side. And I am in the middle, my authentic self. I encompass all my ‘I’s. For the moment there are two of them, but I might need a third one – just in case. ‘He divided himself up threefold: a third fire, a third sun and a third air.’

‘Let me sacrifice again with a greater sacrifice.’ I read the Upanishads and change my mind: I should sacrifice *everything* for poetry. A lot of people sacrifice their personal lives for the sake of celebrity. I do not care about celebrity, but I do care about poetry. So instead of earning money, I write poems. And I look for rhymes, otherwise my poems might create chaos in my existence. A lot – a lot, for instance. If I have a lot of insoluble problems in my life, this is my lot and not a random act of violence on the part of space-time. And I am not happy with my lot, needless to say. So I take the word ‘happy’ and write a poem centred upon this word. What about my rhymes? Not ‘clappy’, needless to say. Well, I am completely stumped. Besides, I am sleepy.

How to get rid of the whole gravitational attraction of the Earth? What for? Not to fall any more. Not to break precious things. To fly like birds and aeroplanes. No crashes – whatever happens you continue to fly. Why should you fly? Is it not better to remain on Earth and browse on grass under some trees? Some think that the life of a cow is boring: no *foie gras*, no caviar, no circuses. No fun, generally speaking. You cannot say ‘a fun-loving cow’, can you? And what about browsing on grass? What about trees and nature in general? Besides, cows do not sin and so go straight to Paradise, bypassing Purgatory. They are vegetarians and murder no one, even if you dare to bar their paths. And they offer you their milk. They are our mothers, our natural mothers.

To lie on the grass, under three trees. What else do you need? Your servant brings you tea with milk and a lemon cake. You partake of all this, repeating the word ‘partake’. You like old-fashioned words. Pessoa says one ought to write for the dead, not for future generations. Only the dead might understand my poetry. So I am writing for them, not for the 25th century. And I had better use as many old-fashioned words as possible, avoiding any recent contribution to the English language. I shall not write: ‘Poverty begets hunger, and hunger begets crime.’ I shall write: ‘Poetry begets joy and slay the dragon.’ Slaying the dragon is an allegory of the triumph of joy over sadness. You lie on the grass and slay the dragon: celebrity, riches.

You wish to buy a jewel for your beloved. You are not acquainted with jewellers but it does not matter: there are many boutiques in the city where you live. So you go out and visit all these boutiques. They are empty; there are no jewels either in the boutiques or in their numerous safes. Have they been stolen? Yes, they have. The police are appealing to the public for any information about the missing jewels. You walk up and down the main avenue of your city, hoping to chance upon one of these jewels. You go to the nearby woods, for thieves usually hide their booty in woods and caverns. You do not find anything. You come home empty-handed and realise that the jewels you are looking for are inside you, in your heart of hearts. You reach your heart of hearts, dig out a dozen jewels and offer them to your beloved.

You know that the faithful remove all obstacles by uttering names. They do not call anybody names – it goes without saying. They utter sacred names and see a multitude of hands that remove obstacles, misery, sadness, madness and so on. They touch your head and your madness takes off like an aeroplane. A few minutes later this aeroplane crashes into a mountainside. All right. You are no longer mad but there are many obstacles you cannot remove on your own. Either your arms are not long enough or your genes withdraw into their own fantasy world as soon as they see the obstacles you want them to remove from your path. So you utter sacred names. You give a garbled account of Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism. Your mantra does not work. So you just say, ‘Mama, Mama.’

Your lips and mind should work conjointly towards God, Whoever He is or is not. No doubt God exists but whenever you speak about Him you should add ‘not’ to demonstrate your awareness of the problem. You cannot say anything about God Who beggars both belief and description. Of course you believe in God but do refrain from describing Him. Why should you be the laughing stock of theologians? They already have a lot of laughing stocks to deal with. So you limit your contribution to the sacred lore by focusing your attention on your lips. They are supposed to utter the secret name of God. The sound may be right but the picture is definitely wrong. You look at your lips in a mirror. Their contours do not look like God’s secret name. Nor does your face, come to think of it. You think about God and your lips make the letter ‘O’.

Your guru says, ‘The high tree invites a breeze.’ If you do not fail to understand what it means, you will understand everything – from quantum mechanics down to God. You should not say, ‘*Up to God*’ – that is too straightforward. When talking about God, you are supposed to resort to what is called a ‘roundabout way’. This is also the Middle Way. Anyway, you should not go the way of all flesh. All other ways are open to you; this one is closed. Today you understand a tiny part of the universe. You wish to understand the whole of it so you meditate upon the high tree and its invitation. A low tree is always lying low: neither winds nor axes disturb it. It cannot be used; nor does it prevent you from

enjoying a beautiful landscape. You should lie low – to be on the safe side. God does not like the high and mighty.

You misunderstood your guru's remark. It is little wonder you are still going the way of all flesh. You should go the way of all mind. If you lie too low, anyone can trample your flesh (and mind) to death. Besides, your guru spoke about a *breeze*, not about winds or storms. The high tree invites a gentle breeze. It lets it cool its branches, twigs and leaves. The countryside is scorched after several weeks of hot sun. So is the high tree – to some extent. It is no wonder that it invites a cool breeze to cope with bad memories. For several weeks the sun was blazing hot. It is no longer *blazing* hot; it is just hot. But the bad memories remain and the tree invites a cool, gentle breeze. You too should get rid of bad memories, of guilty conscience, of sadness. If you invite a breeze, you will no longer have problems with space-time. It is an absolute breeze!

Hindus used to devote a lot of time to sacrifices which they made on a regular basis – every day, to be exact. I have no idea whether they offered lambs on their altars as a sacrifice for their sins. They must have offered *something*, otherwise one would speak neither of sacrifices nor offerings in this connection. Apparently these sacrifices were identical to a calendar they used to find out which season they had to cope with. Moreover, they were duty bound to welcome every season with appropriate sacrifices and other actions. *Routine* is my calendar. I am writing it at great personal sacrifice. The same goes for other books of mine. Soon I shall welcome autumn. The death of leaves, the birth of a colourful beauty. A homage to Pushkin.

'But...bit...ich... Be...ing...not...ought...' You splutter and think it is the best way to express the world and also your feelings. You might be horrified. Actually you do not know what is going on, but your body splits into seven parts and your horror – or whatever it is – turns every part upside down. Perhaps you are in love. Anyway, you are up to your neck in problems. Everything is topsy-turvy in your life, but your problems stand in front of you and only have eyes for you, like women in love. 'Eye...eye...eye...' you splutter. Then you splutter a prayer and God hears it. Now your problems are looking straight through you. After a while they bow and leave your house. You splutter: 'Le...le...le...ave...ave...ave...' Another homage to Parsifal.

If there is a happy event in your life, you should not speak about it to anybody. Only your beloved is allowed to know it. But even she is likely to distort the truth; so are you, incidentally. Everyone distorts the truth, consequently there is no such thing as truth or falsehood. There is nothing like that in the world, let alone in the universe. You say, 'I was happy,' but others remain sceptical about your claims. According to them, you cannot have been happy – not even in your childhood. They look at your face and shake their heads. They count your wrinkles and once again shake their heads. You also shake your

head to intimate they are wrong. Your body remains motionless. Yet they say your body is shaking with sobs. They say you are fatally ill. St Vitus' dance, no less. These people are born choreographers.

There are only illusions. The Creator gave birth to a cosmic illusion, for He knew that only He was real. But He was also an illusion – at least for those who thought about Him. He was beyond their reach and so was an illusion, a figment of someone's imagination. You do not believe in anything or anybody unless you touch it or Him or Her. You touch all of them and say, 'I feel your wounds and scars. You're real, as real as myself.' But you are not real, according to some philosophers. Nor do your colleagues think you are real. You are regarded as dispensable: your death just does not matter. After all, you are just an illusion and can die as many times as you want. You die once and that is sufficient, quite sufficient. Enough is enough.

What is what? And not, and not. Sometimes you just repeat a few words and a question. They make you feel better, for some obscure reason. You feel better and everything is clear. What becomes is a real what. And *what not* becomes *is*, needless to say. It *is*, it *is*, it *is*. What is it? Another what; or not. It is; it is not. Being, non-being. Then a song comes to your mind. You sing it and think that life is worth your attention. Not on account of this song. You can do whatever you like. You can talk nonsense, dance and talk to the moon. And the moon can answer you: nothing prevents it from doing so. You talk and walk and mock those who do not appreciate life. Every word can be repeated; anything can be repeated. Even this laughter, even that funeral. Isn't that wonderful? Nothing is lost; nothing is found. Isn't that wonderful?

'What's on the agenda?' you are asked. 'Everything,' you answer. But if you tackle *all* problems in the space of a few hours, nothing will come of it. You should tackle these problems one by one. You tackle just one problem; you take one thing at a time, as they say. They say many things at a time but it does not matter. You are wholly preoccupied with one problem, whilst other problems escape your notice. They escape you altogether, going on a spree or astray. They have no idea where they are going because this corresponds to their notion of fun. You resolve one problem and lose all others because the world is full of local and non-local connections. You remove a match and your Tower of Babel goes down like a lead balloon. No need to call God.

You were born and you begin to deplore this fact as soon as you realise into which world you were born. Of course this is World Number One, but you just do not care. You would rather live in World Number Zero. No such luck. 'It's better not to be born,' you repeat day and night. But if you are a hedonist, you say, 'Hurray! I was born. How lucky I am! So many people have never been born. Poor things!' All this is as old as the hills. There are suicidal moods; there are resurrection-oriented moods. There are also nirvana-inspired moods. You were born so as not to be born again. No more karmas, no more tears: tears

of joy are also bad for your health. This is as old as the hills. What is not as old as the hills? The hills themselves. They persevere in their being. No moods, no thoughts.

If you say, 'He is as old as the hills,' you take space-time into consideration. The individual in question is not nowhere and if you think about him, he must be standing in front of you. And even if he is far away and you happen to think about him – on a whim, as it were – he is located in space, not in its absence. Even the dead are located in space, in *another* space. There are many spaces and many times. But if you fall in love, you do so in space, not in time. All right, you meet somebody and fall in love with his or her body. You are also as old as the hills and one is astonished to find you can still fall in love with someone's body. Or with someone, for that matter. Love. The sentiment you know by heart. The same goes for desire. You have experienced them so many times. The same feelings, exactly the same. Time does not exist.

Everything is part of the whole. Of course we cannot see *everything*, but we know that whatever we do see is part of the whole. We cannot see the whole either; we just see a few parts of it and that is supposed to be enough, apparently. But it is not: I want to see the whole. I become a mystic and see God Who is the whole. Everything is part of Him and He is in everything. In short, He is everything and everybody. Then we realise that we see only a part of God. Of course we can see the whole of Him in the Sistine Chapel, but this is also a part of God, an infinitesimal part – an image, an illusion. Yes, the Sistine Chapel is part of the whole; so are we. And we are immortal – in parts. There are parts everywhere. And the everywhere is also part of the whole. And what is *beyond* the whole? I am amoral. On the whole.

Spinoza maintains that 'the human mind has an adequate knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God'. Our mind is neither eternal nor infinite. How can it acquire an *adequate* knowledge of these notions? By studying them at the University of Cambridge? Eternity: time which never ends or has no limits. Well and good. But your time, your *personal* time is bound to end and it has many limits. You may think it has only one limit – death. You are wrong. You go to a library and are told that there is a 30-minute time limit on Internet use. This is also your time, not only that of the library. Of course you can say, 'The sky's the limit to our knowledge.' There are many skies beyond the sky you are talking about, and you will never know anything about them, considering our sky's limit.

They often say, 'What remains is the sky.' On their deathbeds they speak about the sky and ask their relatives to put their beds outdoors where the sky can be seen more adequately. And what if it rains? The sky is overcast and so you could not see it. 'I could see the clouds,' you say. 'They are parts of the sky.' 'You'll be soaked through. You'll catch your death of cold,' they say. 'I've already caught my death,' you reply and they put your bed in the garden. The raindrops are washing your face. You ask them to remove your clothes. Now your whole body is being washed. 'Another infant baptism,' you say

to yourself. You are in your second childhood and in your first death. Perhaps in your second birth. So be it.

What are your emotions? A number of motions you feel in your body, mainly in your heart. Your heart is a receptacle for rubbish and also for love and its constituents – hate, for example. No wonder your heart aches from time to time. What is more, you are sentimental. ‘It’s a cheap hat but it has great sentimental value for me,’ you say to your colleagues. And you show them a hat riddled with holes. Actually all your clothes are riddled with holes. You continue to wear them because you are sentimental to a fault. You hear a nightingale sing and say, ‘I heard it in my youth, in my motherland.’ Hearing this nightingale again has already filled you with nostalgia. Your heart is at breaking point. ‘Don’t break it please,’ you say to the nightingale, but its attention is focused on its song.

‘That’s that,’ they say and you wonder what they have in mind. Are they talking about you? Are you dead? Not yet, judging from your body’s presence in the looking glass. Perhaps your reflection exists on its own. Some individuals lose their reflections, others keep them to the detriment of their bodies. Either you lose your reflection or your life. Which is better? If you lose your reflection, you are lost. If you lose your life, you may be found – in Paradise, among other places. If you lose your reflection, you are sure to find yourself in Hell or its *suburbs*: after all, you did not murder anybody. You may build a country house in the suburbs of Hell. And you will live there unhappily ever after.

What about life in Hell proper? What do our souls look like? Apparently they continue to rot. Some say, ‘As soon as you get in the rot sets in.’ But others point out that the souls doomed to spend eternity in Hell begin to rot in their lifetime. When? In their mothers’ wombs. Perhaps they have been rotting ever since the Almighty created the universe. Is that what they call predestination? Or simply destination? Hell. What guided your choice of destination or was it arbitrary? What? God’s free will. There is nothing arbitrary under the sun and even above it. ‘It seems to have been purely arbitrary,’ you say to the doctor: you injured your spine in a riding accident. And what about the doctrine of determinism? Anyway, our souls smell of rotting fruit. They have already rotted into dust. At least that is what they look like.

You often overstep limits – sometimes without knowing it. You think that what you are doing is limitless; so is your thought, by the way. It travels faster than light: you are already on the sun and the most distant star. And light has just set sail for our planet. I think it travels in a boat. Why should it borrow from the sun its chariot? Apollo is dead; so is Poseidon. The latter used to sink both ships and their crews but light has nothing to worry about. Anyway, your thought travels faster than light. So what? You are still on our planet and you own no yachts, no planes. It is true that you have a car. You scramble into it, pull off and speed up the road. After a while you come to the end of the road. ‘That’s that,’ as they say. And they are right, for once.

Physicists say, 'Sooner or later we'll know everything with the exception of the three seconds that followed the Big Bang.' (Isn't it the three seconds that *preceded* the Big Bang?) 'The Earth appeared from nowhere,' say laymen. 'And light, and night, and other planets, and water, and God. He was created in the course of the third second.' 'No,' say churchgoers. 'All this was created by God Who was already reigning over the deep and so on. You should re-read the Bible and memorise the details of the Creation. The Big Bang created only its own theory.' Not to be outdone, doctors are doing some fascinating research into the mystery of the three seconds. This research seems to give some validity to the theory that the Big Bang might have caused cancer.

One wonders if objects and subjects are divided or not. They are probably not, if one questions oneself on the subject. It is true this one is not the One or it that a lot of philosophers enlarge upon in their writings. Nevertheless, it is one in their own right. In one's own right. One is neither he nor she; one is he *and* she; and also the objects they see in one's room. Objects and subjects are virtually identical. You should shut your eyes to exclude your room or rather its space from your field of vision. You are at one with everyone and everything. And yet the only woman you care about does not love you. She is reluctant to become your object. She is already the object of your desire, but she is afraid she might become an object you will put on a chair, in a bed. And you are her subject.

You are praying to an image. This image is not an idol, contrary to what a priest might say. It is just an image. It is not a photograph of a woman you are in love with. Just an image; not even a keepsake. It is a bare wall you are looking at. You do not lament over disasters and destructions. You just feel like praying to this wall. You do not pin your hopes on this wall. You have no idea what you have in mind when praying to this wall. What counts is your prayer, any prayer. Your very life should become a prayer – that is what they say. You do not listen to them. You do not even listen to the wall, to your neighbours' lives. And your prayer is wordless, as Mendelssohn used to say. It is not a song either. But it is not nothing. One inaudible sound, as they say in the East.

Anything goes. This explains what has been going on for almost 30 years. You say 'A' and it goes on condition that you are pushy and so push it either alone or with the help of a generous sponsor. You say 'B' and the same sponsor – or sponsors – propel you to international stardom. Now there is only 'B' in the sky; and on Earth, needless to say. But they say it all the same, all the time. Your sponsors show this 'B' to everybody. They say it is the most beautiful 'B' in the history of humankind. And they sell your 'B' everywhere. The same goes for your 'A' so they say 'aky' and not 'sky'. They say 'aman' and not just 'man'. Then you say, 'C' and they say it is a vitamin. From now on earthlings will find this vitamin not only in citrus fruit and green vegetables, but also in bread and butter – everywhere. Healthy bones, joints, teeth and gums.

Another, yet another. This must have happened before, but you do not remember it. Another is a symbol of immortality: there will always be an *another* in your life. Another, another, another. Collect six tokens for a free T-shirt. You collect six others and get six T-shirts. Then you collect six T-shirts and get a free washing machine. This rite goes on and on; in the long run you become immortal. And all others become yourself. You are yourself at last; and God. And one of the sons of God. And also the Holy Spirit. You are immortal anyway. Now you own a million T-shirts and a billion others, others and what not. Not is of no interest to you: it is *what* you care about. What? Not. You do not see the wood for the trees; nor do you see the trees for the wood. But your family goes for a ramble through the woods every Saturday.

And today is today. You either live in the past or in the future. Or in the present. But your present is different from today. It is brimful of valuable memories and no less valuable hopes, projects and schemes. You have an ingenious scheme for getting rich before you are 30. But it is not that important in the grand scheme of things. What is important is today, this hour, this minute. Last night you gazed at her, your eyes full of longing. What are you doing today? You will not get rich before you are 30. Nor will you get rich before you are 40. And you will never see her again. Today your eyes are full of tears. You know everything is over. But today is today; you have to live through this day at all cost. Doing nothing. Nothing doing. Nothing doing.

In the days of the early Greek philosophers life was much easier. You knew that life was simple because everything was water. At least it was the original substance out of which all others had been born. Thales said that and fell into a well. Well, he joined the original substance and became identical to it. Such a union is praised by both mystics and Hindus. Life was easy. You looked at a table and said to yourself, 'I feel like having a swim this afternoon.' The table you are looking at is water to some extent; so are you, incidentally. But you have to go all the way back to find pure water unspoiled by additives. You meditate for a while and find it. Anyway, it is easier to meditate for five minutes than to go to the nearest coast which might be located in another country. And it is easy to meditate, if your thoughts are liquid.

Anaximenes thought that the fundamental substance was air. Why not adopt his point of view in this day and age? Does quantum mechanics prevent us from doing so? Man has always dreamt of flying amidst the clouds and stars. If everything is air, you fly whenever you do something. And even when you are in your bed, you fly like a cloud, a bird, a raindrop, an aeroplane. It is not much fun sitting inside an aeroplane. It is much more enjoyable to fly by yourself – without using any artificial means such as huge wings and so on. Of course you need to join the air – the fundamental substance. Well, you remove all foreign molecules and find it. You pick up a spiritual duster and wipe them off. You are currently flying at an altitude of 15,000 metres.

You can also say that the fundamental substance is the earth. Whatever you look at is made of it. The universe is reduced to our planet. It is not just at the centre of it: it is everywhere. There are no stars, no firmament, no comets, no stardust. There is only the Earth, but we do not need to worry: its surface is covered in dust and cobwebs. You must on no account remove them, for fear of losing a part of the universe. All your space odysseys are a thing of the past. You just get into your car and zoom off. Or you take a walk to where the stars used to hang. Instead of them, there are lots of cobwebs and spiders. You let out a squeak of fright at the sight of these spiders. After a while you calm down. After all, these spiders are former stars, their fundamental substance. How beautiful they are!

You can also say that the fundamental substance is fire. If this is the case, you are perpetually inspired. You do not wait for inspiration to come; nor do you pray for it. So you do not go to church, seeking divine inspiration. You just sit down in front of your computer and write for ten hours at a stretch. Then you fall asleep and have a dozen sweet, poetry-oriented dreams. Everyone knows that dreams can be a rich source of inspiration for an artist. In your case it is the other way round: it is in your inspiration that your dreams seek and find their inspiration. And what if your fire is just a dream? In this case the dream is a source of your inspiration. All your life you have suffered from a recurrent nightmare that you are trapped in a house on fire. A chicken-and-egg situation.

You can also say that the fundamental substance is ether. You do not know exactly what it is but it sounds nice. Of course this word does not make you think about the colourless liquid used as an anaesthetic. You are reluctant to undergo any operation, however short and beneficial. This night you are thinking about the upper air; and even airwaves are welcome to your room. The new series of *Batman* will be on the air at 9 pm. You wish you could be on the air too. Of course you are not Batman, but there are other heroes in our world. And you might be one of these heroes, if you could settle down inside these airwaves. All channels of communication need to be kept open. You are reaching out to the local community, nay to humanity.

If you lose something – a bunch of keys, for instance – you grow nervous, agitated. You waste your time looking for these keys in every nook and cranny. You pray to St Anthony; yet you do not recall to whom you should pray under the circumstances. You feel as despondent as a man whose wife and two children are in A&E. You wish you had stayed at home last night because you must have lost this bunch in the streets where you caroused with your buddies. ‘We’d been up carousing till the early hours and were exhausted,’ you explain to yourself. ‘I was utterly exhausted when I lost them.’ You know you would give your hind teeth and right arm to recover your keys. You would give the left arm too. Yet you have an identical bunch in your chest of drawers. Anyway, you are in no hurry and can devote a week to your search.

I was about to leave the house and go for a walk. But I was delayed by my inability to find my audio player. I always listen to texts when walking outdoors – except if my friends keep me company. This time I was alone and so needed my audio books. Suddenly I realised I had to relieve myself. I went to the lavatory, left it and headed for the bathroom where, surprisingly, I found my audio player. Had I found it at once, without even looking for it, I would not have relieved myself and consequently felt a little discomfort in the course of my walk. Instead of praying to St Antony, you should allow your destiny to guide you. If you do, instead of wasting your time on lost objects and other trifles, then everything will fall into place.

I am falling back on the method I used many years ago. Perhaps it is a way of life. I just comment on life and am not sure I live it, as if I was allergic to something. I am allergic to some people. I am *allergic* to them: I neither hate nor despise their thoughts and deeds. But I am not allergic to life, to the whole of it. There are holes in it and I dislike these holes; I prefer continuity and harmony. There are pauses in music but they are not holes; they are silences. Sometimes they are hells and once again I realise I am guided by words and not by my thoughts. It is better this way; this is my way of life, the strife between here and there, between one and everyone, between stars and stripes. To find harmony and peace, one has to become the American flag.

If I comment upon a text, I do it from words' angle. Now and then I change my angle of vision and realise it coincides with words. If there were no words, there would be no God. There might have been gods who fed off cries, screams, blood and tears. But God was born into words and became the word. And I do not care if words are the thing of the past or not, if trendy Londoners still care for them. The words used in emails and suchlike are not words: they are signals. Anyway, I am doing what I wish, and I wish to write yet another comment. I have already written a comment on God and the gods. Why not comment upon demons and the Demiurge? Upon charwomen and women in waiting? Running commentary, walking commentary, stopping commentary. Only stopping one takes its time and time as such.

'The sun is new every day,' says Heraclitus. I like to sunbathe in the morning when the sun is not so hot. This morning is not different from other mornings; the sun is not new either. Yesterday the sky was a perfect blue – not a cloud in sight. Today they are in sight, outside. There are a few clouds inside as well, which does not mean I am different from what I was yesterday. Joy and sadness are interchangeable. There is a tiny quantity of joy in every sadness on account of the past and the future. You recall your past joys and hope your problems will disappear in the near future. You are the same; so is the sun. So are mornings, afternoons and evenings. Only the weather might change in the twinkling of an eye.

‘Good and ill are one,’ says Heraclitus. But he does not add ‘on condition that you are beyond good and evil.’ If you are not, you may find yourself in prison for no reason at all. Or is he talking about health? In this case good and ill are *not* one unless you are dead. Of course one can say about a corpse, ‘This is a well-preserved corpse.’ One can also say, ‘This corpse has been badly affected by time.’ What is the difference? But if you are still alive, you should not let time affect you. If you are a man, you should remember the following maxim: ‘Most female models have to retire around the age of 25, whereas a well-preserved man can go on working into his forties.’ You should look like a male model – even if you are in your sixties and seventies. You should parade your health and expensive clothes.

From a doctor’s diary. ‘In my patient’s case, fair was foul and foul was fair; “plus” was “minus” and “minus” was “plus”, in mathematical terms. The interchangeability of antonyms had become possible not through the gradual, Shakespeare-deplored action of Time, as one might suppose – he was too young for that – but through the sudden intervention of cancer. More appalling than the picture of Dorian Gray, the face of my patient looked like what I had seen long ago at some masked-ball: an image of the plague.’ One wonders what was fair under the circumstances. The cancer? Doctors are in the habit of repeating the word ‘beautiful’, whenever they come across a rare specimen of a particular fatal disease.

‘Greater deaths win greater portions,’ says Heraclitus. What is a great death? A death in battle? And what about a small death? If you hit the bottle and die as a result of your addiction, you provide a good example of a *small* death. And what if you have a grandiose cancer? What if your whole body becomes a cancer-museum? Great, isn’t it? Suppose a famous general fails to die in a battle. He retires and dies of cancer. Is his death great? Should we take his past into account? And what if the general hits the bottle? No more battles, no more rockets. He idles away the hours drinking and playing cards. And then he dies of cirrhosis. Great deaths. Those who die them become gods, according to Heraclitus. Is the general a god or a demon?

‘Man walks erect so that discourse would not be muffled and made dumb by the ground.” (W. von Humboldt, *Ueber die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaues*.) Even crawling people raise their heads and speak and yell until their relatives or nurses run out of patience and gag them. But they continue to crawl, although they have nothing to prove. They have already proved that man walks erect not on account of his vocal cords: he can deliver a rousing speech to any crowd, even if he crawls instead of standing on a balcony or on a podium. His speech might be received with cheers and a *standing* ovation, even if he continues to crawl. ‘His manner was informal, without a trace of pomposity.’ From a newspaper.

‘Every beast is driven to the pasture with blows,’ says Heraclitus. Does he mean that men are idle sods? Why can’t they stay in their beds? In monasteries they have an hour for silent contemplation. Every morning. Of course they are not in their beds during these silent hours. What does it matter? You hate the hustle and bustle of the marketplace – that is what you call the world. Yes, the world is a huge marketplace. ‘To remain competitive the company has to be able to adapt to the changing marketplace.’ ‘It’s essential that we maintain our position in the marketplace.’ In the world, in other words. Yes, you are driven to the marketplace with blows. Your ambitions deliver these blows to your head. Your ambitions and greed. A life of prayer and contemplation. The other side of the coin. A dozen nuts. And on the other side? Millions of nuts.

Our latent awareness of the possibility to re-unify humanity through some *lingua universalis* has resulted in the appearance of a multitude of artificial languages. Comenius, Raymond Lulle, J.J. Becher, Kircher, John Wilkins, Leibniz, J.-M. Schleyer, L.L. Zamenhof have all attempted to bring about the reform of communication. From a fairly early stage numbers were integrated into the *prima materia* out of which the ideal language was to emerge. As the Russian futurist poet Velemir Khlebnikov put it: ‘Numbers entered into the spirit of the game.’ Write the amount in both words and figures. A lot of companies will profit from the fall in interest rates. Paper profit, profit margin, profit sharing. Our *lingua universalis*.

Man cannot speak to God unless he takes refuge in total mutism. In my opinion, the true human language was hopelessly distorted and poisoned upon the Tower of Babel’s destruction. Not only do I debunk your trust in articulate sounds but I actually improve upon the Tower of Babel legend, asserting that any sound, be it footfalls or the blowing of one’s nose, was discredited by the builders’ haughtiness. So you must shut up, lie down and suppress all your impulses – especially your impulse to buy. And what if you suffer from uncontrollable tremors? And what about earthquakes? Must you stay in bed in spite of everything? Come hell or high water? You must speak and both your tremors and earthquakes will vanish into thin air. Forever.

‘I am going to tell you the story of the *Paradiso* which happens to be the logical continuation of the *Inferno*. In a literary masterpiece there’s no *Inferno* without a *Paradiso* and vice versa. Artists, like gymnasts and tightrope-walkers, must have a fine sense of balance, of harmony. Like theologians they establish an equilibrium between the forces of darkness and the light of redemption. In a work of fiction, which is both the slave and master of Time, Hell and its torture chambers are not eternal. I disagree with Dante on this point: we shall all end up in Paradise, in the Garden of Eden – far away from the Tree of Knowledge, I hope. Far away from snakes and snake charmers. Far away from death.’ From a book entitled *The Comedy*.

Joy, sorrow and fear are the results of gains and losses. You are content with whatever time may bring into your room. And time may bring you bullets. Actually time is a bullet-carrier. Bullets are leaves, time is the wind. Aren't you afraid? Is that why you have withdrawn from the world, into yourself? Intermittent spells of sulking, withdrawal and vindictiveness. All right, you have forgotten the world. You have withdrawn from their space. But have *they* withdrawn from your Destiny, from your Death? That is the question. Besides, when the people do not fear what is dreadful, then what is really dreadful descends upon them. He who is brave in daring will be killed. He who is brave in not daring will live. He who is brave in not living will live forever.

Talking to my cat. 'Shall we play a game of cat and mouse? What are you doing? You should be ashamed of yourself. Well-bred cats never play like that, especially with mice. Just look at yourself! You're being ridiculous. Well-educated cats are supposed to know how to handle a computer mouse. What did *you* learn at school? At university? I sent you to an Ivy League university in the hope you'd learn how to play with mice. I spent a lot of money on your education. I could have deposited that money in a bank. I spent it on the education of a common cat who'll never become a creative artist. I thought you were gifted. I thought you had a talent for playing with mice. And I wished to make a mouse-champion out of you. A bad investment.' And I kiss my cat on the head.

What does a superman's interior monologue sound like? 'Humans often pride themselves on their "intelligence" and "kindness". These words are meaningless in our midst. We are kindness personified, all of us. Our kindness is tangible – you can touch it, if you wish. We are kind – it goes without saying, as the saying goes. So we are not tempted to speak about it. (Waste of time.) And we are intelligent, very intelligent. In the following sentence: "Compared with monkeys, dogs have a fairly low intelligence" – we are monkeys and humans dogs.' Alas, humans will always be ordinary humans. One does not need to say they are dogs – even Iago is no dog – or monkeys. They are just humans. No supers, no overs.

Everlastingly I roll with the punches. Now I find it natural because I do not notice the insults they hurl at me whenever they have an opportunity to do so without wasting too much time. On every occasion I recall Christian martyrs who began by asking for trouble and then did all they could to get punished by wild beasts, their jaws and fangs. Some of the people I meet now and then are wild beasts. And even if their teeth are rotten, they can eat you alive. They do and leave you alone; or what is left after their meal. Why do I consent to these tortures? Because I think they confirm my superiority – not only because victims are always superior to torturers. They confirm my *artistic* superiority: I am ahead of my time. Any second-rater can say that. But I am becoming a Christian in the process.

I think God can suffer: this does not shock me in the least. Either He does not feel His suffering or if He does, He feels it because He *wants* to feel it. I wrote: to *fell* it. A slip of the pen, as usual? Is His suffering a tree? What kind of tree? The Tree of Sin? It must be different from the Tree of Knowledge. There are so many trees in our gardens we know neither their names nor their meanings. You prune them from time to time. You prune apple trees, trees of knowledge and trees of beauty. What remains is your wisdom and God Whose suffering you want to endure. You have no wish to save humanity; you want to save yourself. You prune the Tree of Art and realise there are no obstacles on your way to the Supreme Knowledge. God and His garden. You are His gardener and so you prune apple trees.

Whatever you do, you cannot get out of your own self. Why? Is your own self in love with you? Does it say, 'I'll never let you go'? It does not. You do not even feel this self of yours. You know it does lurk somewhere, perhaps in your body, mind or soul. Or in your hair. And what if you lose all your hair? In this case, your self will settle in your brain and you will become intelligent at last. So you buy the poison you saw in Chaplin's *Monsieur Verdoux* and lose all your hair. Whenever you take off your hat, everyone sees you are as bald as a coot. But you are as intelligent as Socrates. You wonder what else you can lose so as not to waste your energy on superfluous limbs and organs. Ideally your head should roll on the pavement – as if you had been punished by the guillotine. Your head with a hat.

The world and its contents exist for us, only for us. All of them enter the sphere of our 'I' and our neighbours say admiringly, 'Here goes the citizen of the world.' The world is neither representation nor presentation nor misrepresentation. It is just our body where everything plays games, thinks, drinks wine and vodka; where poems are written and recited. And then we realise that the world is just an illusion, whereupon everything leaves us, without so much as a by-your-leave. Emptiness is a good sign or omen. Whenever we hear the word 'emptiness', we think about deliverance. From our sins, for instance. They have also left us. Our neighbours say resentfully, 'Here goes original sin.' They are green with envy.

Our myths have their origins in the minds of cavemen. They looked at the sky and suddenly saw raindrops. They also felt them on their faces, all over their bodies. And they saw puddles all around them. They said to each other, 'If these puddles grow, they'll inundate our cave. Let us call this phenomenon the Flood. Let us paint these raindrops on this wall of our grotto. Next we'll paint the Flood. Why should we *paint* it? Let us fill this bucket with water and splash this water onto the opposite wall.' Suddenly they heard a voice: 'Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.' The shipbuilding industry has its origins in the mind of God.

I am listening to Schoenberg's songs – the ones that precede his invention of the 12-tone system. They enjoy freedom, their free will; and their will to power, to some extent. Did God take part in the process?

Did He compose them in part? Or are they superfluous, unnecessary? They are not redundant, but they might be unnecessary. Are they? They are *not* because I am listening to them. Perhaps I am unnecessary, superfluous. Let me be superfluous. Let me be. Let *it* be as well, whatever it is. All this is superfluous. What counts is light and whatever receives it. But there are other lights, human lights. They might have been dictated by God. Did *they* dictate what was to be done? At the beginning, at the end?

I was sitting on my divan, for an hour or so. Doing nothing, not even thinking; wasting my time. But Montaigne says one never wastes one's time because one lives. That is enough. One must live and also live above that life; or under it. At least I have to live several lives, otherwise I shall die. I might have several deaths, but I had rather have several lives. All right, I neither act nor think; for an hour or so. And what if I take this 'so' and live within it? Just another life, one of them; a life inside a 'so'. I hope there are many 'sos' where I might live, going from one 'so' to another. And if one says 'so and so', one can live inside 'and' as well on condition that it is spelt like that. It is not an 'end'; it is just an 'and', one of them.

You watch all these beauties, looking at them from afar. They are in the streets, in shops. You do not touch them; it is better not to touch them. Let them be transcendental. They are Platonic or whatever one might think about them from this point of view, or that. If you touch them, they become the point: space, time, purpose, a lot of discussions. You just look at them and they enter your mind. They enter, crawl across your mind and lodge with you for a while. Then, with a wriggle, they manage to crawl through an opening space in your memory: there are many of them. They become a memory lapse, a paradise lost. You will never find them unless you are admitted to Paradise. But you will not be admitted to Paradise without a tie.

A machine is not disjointed and accomplishes much work. This is due to the screws that hold it together. That is their only accomplishment. They do not do anything else. You should not do anything else either. You should concentrate on invisible, spiritual screws, otherwise you will fall apart and accomplish no work. You are endowed with intelligence and wit. But your soul does not take part in their activities. Why isn't your soul attuned to your intelligence and wit? Because you have no screws and therefore cannot hold your constituents together. The mandala on which you should concentrate features a number of screws. Put them where they belong and tighten them. Give your construction another screw to make sure your soul does not escape at night.

I do not understand why scientists are astonished to find that a variety of microbes can survive without water, air, food and notwithstanding the heat that could melt down gold rings and bracelets. If you analyse *our* existence, you will come across a situation which is quite similar to that described in microbe-oriented scientific magazines. You do not need to ask yourself, 'Is there nothing that can be

done to deliver these starving people from their suffering?’ Even if we do not starve, we live without water, air, food and so on – figuratively speaking. Whatever we do and accomplish, our life is always hanging by a thread; so are our accomplishments. Yet we survive, like those microbes. We do not hang ourselves. And if we do, the rope breaks and we find ourselves on the floor.

“‘Sounds, lights and life have dwindled away.’ Is this masterpiece an ordinary on-the-spot report? Is our poet a verist, like Puccini and Mascagni? What does it matter! He suffered a lot. He translated his sufferings into rhymes and rhythms so that we might understand them and carry their message through space and time. Is the poem prophetic? Is it realistic? These rhythms and rhymes may have been surrealistic at first. But overnight they came true, grew real. Unconsciously and unwillingly, the author held the mirror up to nature, following Hamlet’s priceless instructions. Let us honour our poet’s memory by committing his poems to memory.’ From a literary magazine.

I wonder why I do not dream any more. Perhaps I have reached the stage where only deep sleep is allowed to reign, to the detriment of shallow sleep and prophetic dreams. Hindus seem to honour deep sleep unless I am confusing them with born sleepers. These have a deep aversion to dreams and are somewhat identical to the tea drinkers who enjoy only pure teas and shun *mélanges* such as Earl Grey. Anyway, I am neither a Hindu nor a born sleeper. Of course I am annoyed when I have a sleepless night, my nerves being at odds with Morpheus. Or is it my mind that opposes the god on these occasions? Only in the course of such a night can I believe that life is a dream and not a harsh reality – an old hag who says in a harsh voice, ‘There’s no alternative.’

‘We want to enclose the universe in the work of art,’ writes Gino Severini. ‘Individual objects do not exist any more.’ Some people see the world in a grain of sand; others think that God is nature and vice versa. And you are part of nature, aren’t you? So you are part of God or God Himself. In this case you are everything and everyone. The same goes for stones, trees and apples. You paint a still life; an apple is the centrepiece of your masterpiece. Actually there is nothing else in your picture – just an apple suspended in mid-air. Nevertheless the universe is enclosed in your work of art. After painting your picture and looking at it for a while, you decide to burn it: you are a perfectionist. Besides, you are hungry. You pick up a real apple and devour it, whereupon the universe disappears.

A Russian story. An uprising of slaves in Ancient Rome. They march past, waving placards that say, ‘Three cheers for the bright future of feudalism.’ Why should Western countries provide a model for Japan, Iraq or Russia? The growth of history has nothing to do with technological progress. *Tous les régimes se valent à l’exception des régimes pervers*. Does the common reader have an interpreter at hand? All regimes are more or less alike with the exception of perverse ones. Anything is better than our free-for-all marketplace. Of course we should exclude from our honours list all evil dictators such

as Lenin, Stalin and Hitler. But no enlightened despot has been declared *persona non grata*. François I, for instance. Should the function of children's television be to entertain or to enlighten?

Apparently Christ's offspring are in our streets, walking, talking and doing shopping. Suppose it is nothing but the truth. What benefit can you derive from it? Can one of these descendants save the world? Is he or she the Messiah? I would rather believe there are many Antichrists in our midst, given the plight of the poor. And all of us are poor: we have no brain cells. And even if we do have them, they do not function properly. What are those descendants doing? Just walking in the streets, buying Coke? We cannot even wash their feet, for we do not know who they are, where they are and whether they exist at all. Some of us doubt the existence of Christ Himself. Some of us doubt our own existence. But our tombs are there and even earthquakes cannot dislodge them from our cemeteries.

They say, 'The dark night of the soul,' which seems illogical, given that the soul is associated with light. But there might be dark souls in the world; dark bodies as well. There is darkness around us and also light so that we are spoilt for choice. We are not: there is no choice. You love, you are betrayed and forsaken. The darkest hour is just before dawn, as they say. They talk all the time and you cannot help listening to their rubbish. The darkest hour is everywhere and at whatever hour you happen to notice. Is it the brightest hour? Hour, our. All this sounds and does not live, for there are dead sounds. This sound is one of them. Mine, *ein, zwei*. I am a mine of information, of disinformation. You are mine, mine, thine, time. I have not seen you for two years.

Nietzsche says, 'The day of the body.' What about the D-day of the body? What does your body do this day? It smashes the world record. It runs, jumps and skis. All records are smashed. That is what they call 'the D-day of the body' or merely 'D-day': nothing else counts. There are no more landings; there are only endings. But these endings are gorgeous – they are even better than beginnings. The Russians say, 'A good beginning is not inferior to victory.' The English say, 'The beginning of the end.' They mean the point where something starts to get gradually worse until it fails or ends completely, according to one of their dictionaries. This is the meaning you find in dictionaries – an exoteric meaning. What about an esoteric one? Something gets better until it conquers day, the month of May.

I open a bottle of gorgeous wine, pour it into my glass, drink it and begin to cough: it has gone down the wrong way. Suddenly I realise how miserable I am. Even if the wine I drink is gorgeous, I begin to cough and have to lie in bed for ten minutes at least, coughing and enduring my body's involuntary movements. It jumps up and down; so does my soul that is also fond of wine, of red and white Burgundy. And what about those who have no gorgeous bottles in their cellars? They drink running water that goes down the wrong way. This is the way of whatever we do: there is no *right* way. All flesh, all soul. This

was my last gorgeous bottle and it had gone down the wrong way. From now on I shall drink running water. I hope it will go up the right way. The Way.

Absolute freedom of accentuation. This does not concern our poets only. You place importance on your family and work. You beget children and work hard to supply them with food and education. In this case, there is no freedom of accentuation. Of course you can say, 'In my life the accent is on children and the quality of my work. And on the money I earn for my family. And on love.' Too many accents. And what about your soul? Of course you can say you feel your soul and nourish it only when you nourish your children and drink champagne with your wife. You should place importance on the *salvation* of your soul. And on *trifles*. On cards, for instance; on astrology. You accentuate a star and it narrates the sequence of events that are leading up to your death.

A new beauty is born. Some think this beauty is terrible, others are fascinated by it. The eye of the beholder beholds it and says it is beautiful. And what if it is an old beauty? What if this beauty is dying? The eye of the beholder looks at it and says, 'What a beautiful death!' The point is that the eye of the beholder is designed for beauty, not for ugliness. This eye is rose-tinted and even funerals are beautiful from its point of view. Is ugliness in the eye of the beholder? What does this eye look like? Is it black? The previous eye is blind. This eye sees too much. To see the world as it is, one needs two eyes: the beauty-eye and the ugliness-eye. You close the latter and rejoice in your good fortune. You close the former and begin to cry. You open the latter and it sheds tears of happiness.

You enjoy two lives: the animal life and the life of the spirit. You jog and go swimming; you drink, eat and dance. What is next on the agenda? Transcendental Meditation. Your spirit is already risen from the dead and you begin to meditate upon words and images. You take the word 'stone' and meditate upon it for an hour. You recall a demonstrator who was throwing stones at the police. Rather, you recall the *stones* he was throwing, not the demonstrator himself. You have no idea whether he was arrested or not. You get further and further from this demonstrator so that you no longer know whether he was a man or a woman. You are meditating upon the stones thrown at the police. After a while you see only one stone and you have no intention of throwing it at the police. It is a precious stone.

You pick up your 'I' and scatter it into 'the universal vibration', as Marinetti put it. Your 'I' becomes the citizen of the universe; what is more, it vibrates. The universe seems to vibrate with tension; so do you, or rather your 'I'. You vibrate neither with tension nor with joy. You are lying in your bed, which enables you to follow your 'I's adventures closely: nothing distracts your attention from them. You listen to your distant voice that vibrates with anger. Your face is suspended between Saturn and one of its rings. In the evening you write in your diary, 'My bottom lip trembled and tears welled up in my

eyes. I smiled. Tomorrow I'll hang my death between Jupiter and one of its satellites. And I'll burst into laughter.'

I pity those who speak only one language. This language hurls insults at them, orders them about, heaps criticism on them, pours scorn on them. They cannot escape from it, not even in their thoughts. Their thoughts repeat the structure of this linguistic assault so that, in a way, they continuously harass their brains and also their bodies. If you speak three foreign languages, you can switch from one language to another. They insult you in French but you switch to German and their insults do not attain their goals. Inside one language you are always cornered, even if you listen only to your interior monologue. Alas, this monologue of yours displays the same linguistic pattern, the same grammar. And this grammar insults you.

You listen to Gandhi and Tolstoy and renounce the use of violence. You do not like the tyrant who governs your country. So you sit down in front of his palace. A police officer says you can neither walk nor sit near the president. You do not say anything. The police officer picks you up, carries you for a while and drops you in the area where you can both sit and walk. You can even *work* in this area, writing poems and short texts. You rise to your feet, walk for a while and resume your position in front of the palace. The same police officer picks you up, carries you for a while, puts you on your feet and gives you a punch on the nose. You do not know the district where you have just collapsed in a heap. They carry you to the nearest prison, to one of its cells, and punch you on the nose. You do not say anything. You sit down.

I am used to betrayals. With the passing of the years I have come to realise that whatever we face is a betrayal in disguise. Sometimes you see a betrayal face to face: for once, it does not hide its light under a bushel. Such a betrayal takes its cue from Judas. You know that if someone kisses you, you are being betrayed. But people do not always betray you with a kiss, which is not necessarily a good omen, contrary to what you may think on the subject. They betray you with smiles, with tears, with flowers. They do not always *kill* you. They kill you only if they have no desire to protract the process and if they are fed up with amateur theatricals. Once upon a time you said to yourself, 'This was the first in a series of betrayals.'

This morning I listened to Schoenberg's *Second Quartet*. For the first time I heard it in my thirties. I might have grown up differently, had I heard it in my youth. According to scientists, one element might have altered the fate of the universe. 'Might-have-been' sounds even more poignant than 'has-been'. You replace one element by another and the universe does not see the light of day, the light of God, the *lux*. I might have missed the light of day too, but I was born. And I listened to Bach, Haydn, Beethoven, Wagner. I was, I am. And I can listen to Schoenberg, Zemlinsky and Stravinsky. Even my cat listened

looking, coming late. At least all those dandies did not think they had come too late. They were born at the right moment.

When I think about Jesus Christ, I seem to forget that, more than 20 centuries ago, He atoned for all my sins. I think rather of his cry, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ I wonder why the evangelists quoted this. Probably because it is a strong argument for Christ’s human nature; and also for his divine nature. A sham would have repeated what he had said in Gethsemane, ‘Not as I will, but as thou wilt. Thy will be done.’ A transcendental vision of the nature of God is increasingly commonplace. You see either Yahwe or Christ or Krishna or Indra. I see no one, nothing. ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ This cry seems to enclose all visions, transcendental and terrestrial; all worlds and modes of being. And it guards one against the temptation to conclude.

In France – and also in Belgium – the expression ‘*sans problème*’ was replaced by ‘*pas de souci*’. When? Two years ago, three years ago. No problem. You hear this expression everywhere, day in day out. In the long run you get the feeling you are healthy and rich, famous and immortal. Not only as an artist, mind you. You are *physically* immortal. I am sure that if I talked to these people about the second law of thermodynamics, they would answer, ‘*Pas de souci*.’ And death, death? *Pas de souci* either? Of course. In the Hereafter you are bound to meet remarkable people. Besides, you are bound to resurrect with your body so that all the pleasures associated with it will always keep you company. And the pain you might feel on the deathbed? ‘*Pas de souci*. Anaesthesia.’ *Pas de souci*. Paraclete. Logos.

Whenever I have dinner, I do not think it is my last supper – or anybody’s last supper. It is not the last supper of the world. In other words, I am not Jesus Christ. Yet I am supposed to be Jesus Christ or Brahma, Brahman, Atman or any of the Hindu deities. You should identify with the One, otherwise you are two, three, four. You suffer from multiple sclerosis. I eat a slice of bread; I drink a glass of wine. Are they just a slice of bread and a glass of wine? Are they more or less? They must be more or less, otherwise they are less than nothing, more than nothing. They are either flesh and blood or not even a slice of bread, a glass of wine – just hay and water. Everything is either more or less. Or else it is less than nothing.

“‘If I’m not mistaken.” How could I say such a thing? God is never mistaken. The sentence “I had been mistaken in believing Nick was mad” belongs to the human world. If I say “Nick is mad”, it means that Nick *is* mad. Like humans, the Almighty can become a member of a non-profit charitable organisation. (Actually *all* gods are members of non-profit charitable organisations. And they leave *all* their money to charities.) But, unlike humans, God is never mistaken. Pagan gods *are* mistaken from time to time. I make no mistakes. If I say “the world is mad,” it means that my world *is* mad – no question about it.

Does that mean I am mad too? Not at all. Spinoza says I should not pay attention to the world. All right – you go mad and I remain aloof.’ From the diary of a madman.

Today is today. You should live today and not tomorrow – this is the golden rule. You should not think about what might happen tomorrow. Anyway, you know nothing about the future and very little about the past. But you do know what is going on, at least in part. But this part allows you to enjoy life instead of destroying it. You destroy it through your memory that makes you repent and regret what you did 30 years ago. If you live today, you destroy your memory, if only in part. But the part you destroy allows you to enjoy this twilight that should not make you think about the death of the gods. It is just the twilight, nothing else. You are not in the twilight of your career. You are just the colours you enjoy whenever you look out of your window.

Cause and effect are identical twins. Cause does not precede effect because it is the effect and vice versa. We say ‘vice versa’ all the time and this reflects the state of things. God is nature and vice versa; the sun is the moon and vice versa. Whatever we see above our heads are suns and moons; or rather ‘sumoons’. There is nothing else in the universe. We say ‘nothing else’ all the time. Whenever we are on a diet, for instance. ‘I’ve already eaten a sole, a chicken, a pork chop. You shouldn’t eat anything else. Nothing else, nothing else. Nothing, nothing.’ And suddenly we are swamped by an avalanche of letters/phone calls/complaints. They do not depend on our will. They are their own causes and effects. The fatter we grow, the more we eat. We grow fatter and fatter. The cause is the effect. And vice versa. A vicious circle.

I envy early Christians. They talked about notions and words. ‘Consubstantial’, ‘non-consubstantial’. They argued and excommunicated each other. One might think they talked nonsense, wasting their time on letters and suspension points. But whatever they said was somehow related to eternity and the glory of God. Today, we talk nonsense, day in day out – whatever our subject matter. Even if we talk about God, we talk nonsense. A load of crap/nonsense/rubbish. A lot depends upon atmosphere, atmosphere, as they say in a French film I have never watched. And upon time of course. Time moves forward in a straight line as if flanked by walls. Now and then you see a niche in one of the walls. Once inside it, you can say whatever you wish: it is a no-nonsense niche.

There is no essential difference between the human brain and a machine. Philosophers and scientists have been talking about it for a century. What about the human heart? Every desire you experience makes it go faster. Or it misses a beat. It is as if you were pressing a button or turning a knob. What about the human body? It sees a beautiful pair of legs and tries to catch up with its owner; as if you had pushed a button. Let us say that your destiny and our determinism continuously fiddle with some remote control. Of course you cannot expect to get everything you need at the push of a button, even if this

button is located on the remote control. You get *something* you need; you survive. What about your soul? You press a button and it goes to heaven, like a spaceship.

You realise you are no longer yourself. You are without a name. You write it down and do not recognise it. It is sad to see someone estranged from their own name. You repeat it out loud. You do not recognise your voice. But it is not the voice of God – make no mistake about it. It is just *not your voice*. And the word it utters is not your word or name. Perhaps it is just a word, not a name. Is every word a name? Be that as it may, whatever you say is neither you nor your name nor your logos. What is it? A load of crap/nonsense/rubbish. We lost the name of God a long time ago. And the name of God was our name, our secret name. Needless to say, we lost ourselves. But we got the entire world.

However often I may hear, ‘Make yourself at home,’ I feel at home only when I am at home – in my house that looks like a cottage. Needless to say, my home is my castle and a huge library is the centrepiece of this castle. Last year I went to Angkor and the year before to Egypt. I did not feel at home in those countries. Of course I was overwhelmed by the beauty I saw; but I did not feel at home. At home I have a few books on Angkor and Egypt; and a few documentaries. I derive more pleasure from them than from the monuments I saw in the flesh, so to speak. Of course you can say, ‘The world is my castle,’ but you are unlikely to feel it. And if you do feel it, a case of food poisoning will make you change your mind.

The mere presence of an exclamation mark may cheer me up. Of course I do not write, ‘How happy I am!’ In this sentence the exclamation mark is redundant. It is much more useful at the end of mournful sentences such as, ‘I am just some sad-sack writer trying to get a book published,’ or ‘I have made a real mess of my life’. An exclamation mark alters the sense of whatever you note down. I type an exclamation mark, whereupon the word ‘mess’ becomes its own antonym. Yes, one’s life should be messy, otherwise you are bound to get bored and opinionated. At the beginning Christianity was not dogmatic and even the word ‘heresy’ had no pejorative overtones. Jesus Christ. God, human being, both? There was a diverse range of opinions on the issue. And then the Church put Christianity in order.

I am listening to Bartok’s quartets. Every episode or even a short theme comes as a surprise – out of the blue, as it were. And yet everything is structured and harmonious – to the point of making me think I should model my life upon this music; and upon Schoenberg’s *Second Quartet* and his marvellous piece *The Book of the Hanging Gardens*, Opus 15. It would be wonderful to walk in such gardens. Hanging but not falling. It is just a question of keeping the Earth and the air in equilibrium. And what about my life? Should I keep my life and death in equilibrium? Or should I get rid of death altogether? One is naturally driven to tip the balance in life’s favour. Should one do that? But for death, art would not have come into existence. The same goes for life.

‘I have realised today,’ said Mahler, ‘that articulate art is greater than inarticulate nature.’ He had just conducted Beethoven’s *Pastoral Symphony*. My friends are always surprised at my indifference to the beauty of nature. Whenever I happen to walk in the woods, I do not look at trees and birds. I do not listen to the latter’s songs either. I listen to literary works which are far superior to whatever I come across in the woods. Friedrich’s paintings are more beautiful than the landscapes he painted. Fra Angelico’s saints are saintlier and wiser than their prototypes. What about Christ and the Blessed Virgin? They are what they are. They are the same everywhere: in heaven, in museums, at the beginning of our era. The same goes for God the Father. Before the Big Bang, after the Big Bang.

Do you have enemies? If you wish either to avenge yourself or turn the other cheek, the answer is ‘yes’. One’s worst enemies are one’s former friends. In this case there will be no ‘other cheek’. Only your former friends’ cheeks will come to the fore. And you will slap them to your heart’s content. You may also kill your former friends. Wait a minute. Isn’t it more subtle and devastating to turn the other cheek? You turn one cheek and your enemy slaps it violently. You turn the other cheek and he slaps it too. You go on turning your cheeks and in the long run your enemy realises your superiority. Not only do you wholeheartedly adhere to a Christian commandment, but you manage not to fall, for all the violence of the slaps. You neither stumble nor fall down. You have won.

‘The French. Wonderful people. Not satisfied with what they get *automatically*. Never queuing for food from soup kitchens. And even millionaires often content themselves with that food. Supersonic food. In what sense is soup-kitchen food “supersonic”? It is as unsavoury as fast food. Some Americans (and Europeans) think that no time should be wasted on food, on eating. To them a restaurant and a dinner table are just gas stations. A gallon of gas, two gallons of gas, fat-free gas. They laugh at the French who can spend two or three or four hours in a restaurant. But Time is *foie gras*, not money. Ye shall eat the fat of the land. Ye shall savour the fat of the land.’ From the diary of a gourmet.

Our life. Mad, sad? Both? Is there anything sadder than the madness of a former mistress? I hear the same voice, and even the words she utters today are not new: she was in the habit of using them 30 years ago. But now they are disjointed and hard to follow. And even if I do manage to follow them, they lead me to a madhouse. The world is mad; so is humanity. But there are people whose madness sets them apart from others. If you work like mad to get your homework in on time, you are not mad: you do not claim you are Napoleon. I shall not be surprised if tomorrow my friend says over the phone, ‘I am Marie-Antoinette.’ She suffers from a persecution complex, from a superiority complex, from an inferiority complex, from two cancers. What hasn’t she suffered from? From a massive heart attack.

What is 'is'? And what is 'was'? And what if 'is' is Is? Sometimes all depends on inverted commas and capital letters. Mount Ararat is traditionally associated with Noah's Ark. Apparently the Ark is still on its summit but none will ever contemplate it because it has been forbidden by God. So the Ark *was* on the summit and probably *is* on it, in spite of earthquakes, storms and so on. Some explorers claim to have seen the remains of the Ark. What is 'have seen'? What is 'has been'? If you find the remains of the Ark, you will say to your colleagues, 'It was and now it is a has-been.' It is, it is – as long as we read about it; as long as we live. As long as it rains in torrents. It does, it does. It will, it will. At will.

I have forgotten everything. When you try to recall what you cannot recall, you think you have forgotten everything. It is not just a *lapse* of memory. It is *lack* of memory. You are on your own now: no past will ever help you. Nor will the future. Time is as naked as any girl engaged for a porn movie. No events, no ideas, no beauty – only Time that is as naked as the kings they speak of in fairy tales and newspapers. I do not say I cannot recall myself. Here I am: my legs and arms, my armchair. What is all this about? Life on Earth, on any surface, even if it is not a surface but a hole. Life is everywhere and I touch it as often as I can. My fingers are alive. I touch it again and recall last year. I embrace and kiss life, whereupon I recall one woman. And one man, one it, one one.

We overestimate the word 'beauty'; and also this notion. I may fall in love with *a* beauty – a beauty queen, for instance – but I mistrust the Platonic variety of beauty that is too absolute and abstract. Memling's paintings are *not* beautiful; the Holy Virgin's faces are almost ugly. Anyway, beauty is suspect and ugliness is universal, all-embracing. Of course they talk about inner beauty that radiates from the saints' eyes. And what if it does not? What if you see only ugliness? Ugliness queens and kings? You cannot say, 'Ugliness is in the eye of the beholder.' It is everywhere, like God. It is both omnipresent and omniscient. And it is certainly not skin-deep. All masterpieces are ugly, rough – even if they are as perfect as the *Divina Commedia*. They have nothing in common with glossy magazines. They are Jewish prophets.

How to define the Holy Virgin? Theologians have done their best to find out who is Jesus Christ's Mother. Is She His Mother? She received Him, gave birth to Him. She received Her gift, our gift. In Germany they speak about a character who knows how to listen. Mumu, Moma, Momo – I do not remember his name. I know a dozen people who have this gift. But none of my friends knows how to receive, to accept. The Holy Virgin did not just accept her destiny. *Amor fati*. She accepted the world and its history, its sins and glory. She received the archangel Gabriel. She was not skin-deep beautiful. This was not a date. She did not go there on a date with a boy she used to know. She did not budge from where she was. She received him and Him. She received Her gift. She received Herself.

To receive and to give birth, at the same time. If you receive, you do not have to do anything else. No effort on your part? A passive effort. She received and *passively* gave birth to Jesus. She was where She was; She received what She had to receive. If you receive something, your life takes part in it; otherwise this gift is lost on you. She gave birth to a child She had received. An artist receives a gift; thanks to this gift they can do something. An artist receives another gift and creates a masterpiece, for the artist gives birth to the gift. You bear this gift inside your body and give birth to another gift. Creation is a succession of gifts. One looks at one of these gifts and another gift is born – as a result of one's contemplation, meditation. As a result of one's mission.

St Paul used to fulminate against pagans, Jews and others. Apostles talked day in, day out. Martyrs awaited their deaths. The Holy Virgin received what She was destined to receive and did nothing else. She did nothing. No erotica. She listened and received. If a woman longs to have a child, she must act. She must find a suitable man and marry him. Or she may sleep with him without being married to him or anybody else. The Holy Virgin was married. But did She ever act? She received her husband, her child: that was Her destiny. Did She consent to it? Perhaps not. She was just grateful. Gratitude, non-action. Do women ever conceive? They do. She did and She did not. She conceived and received. A receptacle, not a recipient. A womb. The womb. The Mother.

I go and I do not. They say that any movement is just another proof of immobility. Their opposites coincide round the clock and thus I coincide with my enemies. Why should I? What is written in the sky? A few clouds, as usual. I am reading them and they yield their truths. What am I supposed to do with the truth of a cloud? Whatever is is the truth. Not even a part of it – the whole truth and nothing, nothing, nothing. No movement. You stop in the middle of a sentence, of a gesture. But Time does not stop and if it does, you should engage in a battle and win it, otherwise both Time and the sun will be angry with you. I am my own enemy now. It is easier to argue with myself, winning, losing, crossing rivers, escaping from Egypt, from Russia.

He is my friend; yet I do not trust him. Isn't that a bit of a contradiction? It is not. I trust neither my friends nor my enemies. I do not even trust myself. Why should I? Duncan says that he puts infinite trust in Macbeth, if I remember rightly. Anyway, he trusts him, whatever the wording of his trust. And a few hours later Macbeth murders him. What if I commit suicide without asking my own permission? I cannot trust my suicidal impulse. This does not mean I have to fight against my doppelgänger. I am talking about my suicidal impulse which is part of myself. I do not trust this part – and the rest of my substance. What *can* you trust on Earth? Weather forecasts? Prophets? Mexican calendars? Jesus Christ? He is no longer with us but we trust Him. Nothing doing.

My soul has not been liberated from the thralldom to the flesh. It is imprisoned in it and all these 'its' still wallow in the luxury and mud. If my body writes a poem, the soul writes it too: it cannot do otherwise. The body eats, thinks, creates a series of worlds and the soul follows in the body's footsteps. The body is important nowadays and philosophers talk respectfully about it. According to them, you should not strive to discard it, let alone get rid of it. You should listen to it, talk to it, follow its advice. Even if Jesus Christ's stigmata are bestowed upon you, your soul does not take part in the ritual. It is your body that receives them and shows them to everybody while your soul cringes in terror. Then it begins to howl and sets your teeth on edge. You end up getting rid of the soul.

'The soul is a harmony,' says Pythagoras. 'If the lyre is broken, can the harmony survive?' asks Simmias. And the music of the spheres? Will it ever be broken? Don't bring up the second law of thermodynamics, the Big Crash, the Big Crash-and-Burn or whatever they call this phenomenon. The music of the spheres is your soul and it cannot be destroyed, however strong these second laws are. Second-rate laws. Even if there remains only a series of black holes, music will not die. They will just call it 'the music of the black holes' – whoever they are. Well, they are concert-goers. The universe is a concert hall. They are born – or go to this concert hall – and listen to this piece of music in their cradles, in their offices, in their coffins. They cannot choose but listen to it, to the Soul.

I would not mind becoming a dark computer screen in my next incarnation, but I loath to sit before one, twiddling my thumbs or immersing myself in a soap opera of virtual worlds. Their fluid, timeless outlines only add to my confusion. In this incarnation of mine I am a human being and therefore I think. But computers think as well, according to our scientists. At least they *may* think and even try to destroy us because they do not like our orders. And they *may* think we are not intelligent enough to order them about. What is more, we do not deserve to live on Earth or elsewhere. They *may* reach this conclusion in the years to come. That is why I wish to become a computer in my next incarnation. I wish to take part in the war against humankind.

You buy a newspaper and read it to find out what kind of second you are living through; and you are *not* to add 'willy-nilly', for it is sure to spoil the fun. Yes, you are clinging to the present and say 'yes' to it like Joyce's heroine who also says 'yes' to the past for the simple reason that Joyce likes the sound of the word 'yes'. Perhaps he does not like its meaning, but this does not really matter as long as the sound is beautiful; and it is as beautiful as Mozart, Bach and Schubert put together. You put them together and hear 'yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes', and all these yeses – for once there are no noes in the neighbourhood – are meant to depict the beauty of life; and every single 'yes' is as beautiful as Raphael's Madonna, as the Russians used to say.

Some thinkers thought they had discovered everything, not only the wheel; they knew the world was made up of water, and air, and ether, and *nous*, and our thoughts, and our tales of woe, and our idiots who are keen on tales of all sorts – especially those told by Shakespeare. So those thinkers thought and said to everybody, ‘There are no problems. They have been solved, all of them. We’re speaking of the problems that used to burden us and you and everybody. But these problems have been solved and dissolved. You have nothing to worry about.’ And you say to yourself, ‘It’s blurred, it’s a blur, just a blur. It all happened so long ago it’s just a blur to me now. And today I’m happy – that’s what counts. Counting out my happiness.’

There are individuals who write letters to themselves and ring their own doorbells. And they welcome themselves with open arms. They open their arms and receive their bodies and souls. They warm them up and, after a while, show them out. Alone in their rooms, they feel cold and may catch their deaths of cold – a lot of deaths and no rebirths – if they do not receive their own letters; and their bodies and souls. And if you are too lazy to go as far as the front door and ring your doorbell, you can give a present to your body and soul. You need no one to get presents, provided you have an object within your reach and call it a ‘present’. You do not have to wait for Christmas to eat a Christmas pudding.

Good cannot exist without evil. A strong opposition is vital to a healthy democracy. You may say, however, that evil is not a *healthy* opposition and democracy needs a *healthy* opposition to remain healthy and prosperous. It is true that evil is a *strong* opposition, especially if we happen to deal with an evil *empire*. And poverty, starvation, ignorance? These are the *forces* of evil in our society today. The same goes for yesterday and tomorrow. And if we manage to get rid of these forces in the distant future, we shall have to restore them to power; otherwise good will disappear forever. And what can one do without good? And without evil? Of course one could settle down *beyond* good and evil – in the great Beyond, in other words.

Can one be led astray? What does that mean? The road to happiness runs straight as a die. All right, all right. What next? What is happiness? Creature comforts, a union with God or rather with the Holy Trinity; a union with good, a private swimming pool. We always come back to creature comforts except if we are in a monastery or in a desert. We are not. And we are led astray by our unsuitable friends. Well, at some point one *was* led astray – in the direction of alcohol and drugs. But one has already come back to creature comforts, inspired by multimillionaires and the tabloid press. ‘The threat of a good beating should keep him on the straight and narrow,’ our fathers say to our mothers. Then an angel comes and leads us astray.

According to Chrysippus, the good man’s happiness differs in no way from God’s. There is only one happiness in the world and hedonists call it the ‘One’. But God is immortal and the good man is not. Of

course he will find himself in Paradise – sooner or later. Does he have any reason to doubt the truth of the New Testament? He says to himself, ‘I am good – beyond a shadow of a doubt. And what about the great Beyond? If there *is* such a thing, I’ll certainly land up in Paradise. And it’s worth my while to remain a paragon of virtue. What if there’s *no* such thing?’ God does *not* talk to Himself along these lines. He knows for sure there *is* such a thing as the great Beyond. That is why His eyes have always shone with happiness.

‘Last night I said to myself, “She is coming. She might be a schoolmistress. I shall ask her to give me a lesson. And to spank me for my mistakes and insolence.” Tonight I pulled off my trousers and bent forward in anticipation of her brutal caresses. I remained in that meek and masochistic posture for half an hour at least. Then I fastened the “spanking-belt” across my buttocks. I tightened my “spanking-belt”, conjuring up the image of a beautiful and obliging stewardess. “Please fasten your seatbelt,” she said, holding out a small tray with a glass of champagne on it. “For your own safety,” she added. “I haven’t fastened this strap across my body for safety,” I retorted, picking up the glass. “I *desire* to feel unsafe. Please, give me a good spanking.” “After take-off,” she said with a smile.’ From the diary of a masochist.

The Society for Psychical Research is investigating reports of a ghost at the old vicarage. Have I ever seen a ghost? Do I believe in ghosts? I do not. Yet the Society for Psychical Research is taking the trouble to investigate reports of a ghost. Actually I misread the name of this society. ‘For *Physical* Research,’ I read. Can our machines detect the presence of a ghost? There is nothing to detect – only a story here, a story there. A headless ghost walks the castle at night; or so the story goes. But the ghost does not go. Nor is there such a thing as a headless horseman. There are only memories, fears, feelings of guilt, visions, prophecies. Horses, riders, angels, swords. One wonders if it is not better to suffer from Alzheimer’s.

‘The ghost’s words put him on his guard against reality within which there are only graves, skulls, worms and ghosts prowling in the dead of night. “Your uncle poured a huge quantity of poison into my ear. You should avenge your father.” Oddly enough, those are his own words which, in order to strengthen his resolution and vindicate his actions, he attributes to his father’s ghost. But, as often happens in real life, our own words take on a new significance when uttered by somebody else. Our words outgrow their one-dimensional environment and become part and parcel of the cosmos. A game loses its garish colours, turning into a black-and-white truth. Hamlet hates his uncle. Since his return from Wittenberg he has been looking for a pretext to murder him.’ From an essay on *Hamlet*.

I wish I could live in the past. Of course, it goes without saying that I am not the only old-timer in this stupid new world. There are many old-timers and old-spacers around. We should all meet up – just for old times’ sake. ‘Much of the town centre retains its old-world charm, with buildings dating from

Shakespeare's day.' After reading such a sentence, I remain in transports of delight for almost an hour. I throw my head back and look at the sky as if this town could be found in heaven. An old heaven, an old Earth; the first heaven, the first Earth. Old Jerusalem. Old England. And I hear a great voice out of heaven, saying, 'A tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury.' Death, sorrow, pain. I do not mind, provided the idiot's tale is told by a genius.

She answered a few indiscreet questions I had put to her out of curiosity and cupidity. She answered them without batting an eyelid as if the 'astonishment' program had been temporarily switched off. And I think she answered my questions truthfully. Had a lie detector been dropped into her décolleté by one of my computer's cronies? A lie detector, a truth creator? Never mind her sincerity or falsehood. What I did care about, however, was the *result* of our conversation. Did we go to my room? Did she undress before the mirror hanging in front of the bed? Did she multiply her nakedness to infinity? Did she kneel down by my side? Did she cover me with kisses? From head to foot? No, no, no, no, no. Bloody computer. I wish I could have lived in the 19th century.' From a science-fiction novel.

A talk show again. They are talking about children now. Do children suffer when their parents separate, divorce, decide to lead two lives instead of one? And they come to the inevitable conclusion that children suffer a great deal in the course of these events. Any child, in any country, at any age. Do they realise that sometimes children do not love their parents? Or adore them *separately*? Do they realise that some children crave for solitude and actually seek to liberate themselves from paternal hands and laps, from their proverbial warmth? What do I do without my parents? I am building the skyscraper of the future where there are no parents, only offspring. Only a few words that speak for themselves; or remain silent.

It is not over. What is done is done and not done. And *not* is always in there, out there, there, there. Not I, not he, not she. Only it, it, it. And my hanging gardens. I hang in these gardens and out of them. There is nothing but them and it. Or superego, or *untermensch*. And Unter den Linden. You and a thoroughfare. Berlin, prior to the Second World War. We cannot keep what we have here and everywhere. And everywhere becomes where and every. Listen to Bartok, Schoenberg, Berg, Webern. They are prior, prior, prior, prior. Prior to all this mess. Prayer. I am not of their number. I am after, born after the Second World War. The Third World War? No, no. We are too cautious, too devious. After, after, an after-party. No more parties, only afters. And never minds.

You look at minds and bodies. You say, 'Here are minds, there are bodies.' You put them together. What is the result of your activity? Minds and bodies are together. And where are souls? There is no harmony without souls. You hear disharmony and resolve to bring in a number of souls. They fly to your rescue or rather to the rescue of these bodies and minds. They rescue them and become human beings who live happily ever after. After, after, after. Ever, ever, ever. They do not live forever; they live ever and also

after. And also before. But not now, not now. What do you care about this before? And that after? And the Hereafter? They follow each other: here, after, before, days of yore, days of yoke. You count them. You do not.

And figures. Is it a three or an eight? Is it an eight or a three? It is both, it is both. They are in the same boat and float down and up, as the whim takes them. Eight is heavier than three so they sink to the bottom of the ocean. Then three defeats eight and they fly to heaven where they become 11, 12, 13. You hear the music, don't you? It is 13, 12, 11. It is logical, harmonious. Digits, figures and numbers play an important role in music, in society. You say, 'Five, six.' You write all this down. And the stars dance to your numbers and music. Nothing will ever dance, not even Saint-Saëns' *Danse macabre*. You will be lying in your bed, twiddling your thumbs, your legs, your hair, your thoughts, your fears. Twiddle, twiddle, little star.

One note, two notes. Music leads you to definitive harmony, to definitive solution and resolution. You cannot say 'final solution', can you? Everything is poisoned; only music is not. So it leads you to eternal harmony, eternity and what not. You arrive at the station, at your destination, exhausted, hungry and joyful. 'That's final,' you say to yourself because you continue to talk to yourself, whatever happens. Nothing happens except that you have arrived at your final destination. What are you going to do with this destination and this finality? You will leave them where they are. What else could you do? Music does not speak to you. It fills you with dread, dead and mad. It fills you even with bad grammar, with good, evil and beyond. It feels you.

I aspire to harmony, but harmony comes only to those who are ready to receive it. I am ready. Well, almost. Harmony is coming at eight o'clock, so I have half an hour to get ready. Getting ready. Listening to Berg's *Violin Concerto* dedicated to the 'memory of an angel'. A daughter of his friend, apparently or mistakenly. Manon her name was. Only angels and death are harmonious. And notes. You play three notes together: C-E-G. A C-Major chord. The most melodious harmony you can dream of. Beethoven's melodies are often chords in disguise: he put them together. I am a harmony myself, whatever I do. Even if I commit adultery or murder. Harmony is inside, not outside or in heaven. I put myself, harmony, melody and angels together. Nothing doing. To the memory of harmony.

There is nothing beyond, behind. You say the world will end tomorrow. Tomorrow comes but the world does not go. There is something right under your nose and that is what is; the rest is a figment of your imagination. Your imagination goes somewhere and finds something, for it needs to find this and that to survive, to last for another century. Why do you need your imagination? You do not need anything. Lie down and forget your needs, your deeds. Nothing has ever happened; nothing will come and say, 'You are nothing.' You relax and think that your window is open. And a quantity of fresh air comes

through this window. You feel this air and its quantity; so much the better. Feel what you can feel. Live as much as you live.

You do not live; neither do I. What do I do? I look at something or at nothing; I smell and touch. And my touch says something; or nothing. You need a word and it comes. It goes at once so you do not understand the word. It does all it can to save you. You are not saved; you have never been saved. You might be saved tomorrow or the day after. You will be saved, in the end. We were thinking about going to Switzerland, but in the end we went to Austria. You went to Austria and you were saved once and for all. All was saved, for once. Nothing was saved. It was nothing that was saved. You have nothing on your hands; and a lot of time. You put this time in your pocket, but nothing stays in your room. Nothing will stay forever.

This is what and not. And what is not and what not. These words get in the way; and the way gets in the words. You may fall asleep; you wake and rise, determined to do something. You do something and this something does you. All right, you are done; so is something. What next? Next is what was because there is nothing else, as they say. Under the sun, above the sun. What about the stars? Aren't they above the sun? And we are under the sun, aren't we? And we are new. We were born yesterday or the day before. Anyway, we are new, brand new. What's new in the fashion world? they ask. *We* are, we answer. We do not answer; we just live. We are neither new nor old. We are – that is what counts.

And again, again. I count whatever can be counted. Counted upon, so to speak. No. Whatever counts is far away. And what is far away does not count because you cannot have it in your room which is spacious enough to shelter half a dozen refugees from the rain. But there are no faraway objects and subjects in your room. And the weather is fine. I go out and bless the universe that has been waiting for my blessing since time immemorial. Another figment of my imagination. No one waits for anybody. You just sit there, looking at your ceiling, out of the window, out of the door, out of the wall. Everything is out; so are you. So am I. I go out because I am already out. That is what harmony is about. You are out, so you are out. And about, around.

I do, I am. So what? What is what and I do what. I am and I do am. I have to do something to prove I am. I write 'I am' and thus prove that I am or am not, for I can write 'I am not'. I can write anything – YOU, for instance. I write 'you', but this does not mean you will come at once. You will never come, that is for sure. But I shall come, once in a while. For once, I am here. And I go there. What shall I do there? Whatever I do here. That is what is called 'union', 'reunion', 'village'. I have a house in this village and they bring me milk, every morning. I drink the milk and wait for another morning. The morning I am waiting for comes and I drink milk. This is the milk of the Earth and of my only mother whom I have found at last.

Do death and life coincide? They do not: life is life and death is death. We all know that. We also know that we shall live after death, after our first life. We shall also live after our first death; and after our second death unless we get rid of samsara, samaras or whatever they call it. They call it 'karma' and we get rid of it. They call it 'death' and we get rid of it too. What is left is life and we enjoy it to the utmost. We enjoy this life of ours in our swimming pools and on beaches about which I know nothing except that they are beaches. There is the sun above these beaches; there is the moon above them as well. But no one cares about this moon or any other moon. It is the sun that counts. And it counts, counts, counts, counts, counts. It also discounts.

You are you; so am I. I am I and you are you. We live, don't we? We die; not yet, not yet. The word 'yet' allows us to live; so does the word 'not'. It does not say we do *not* live; it says we do *not* die. It also says we are not. If we are not, we cannot die because what dies is or has been. There are lots of has-beens in our world and what has been will come into existence after a while. And this while will last for a while. And so on and so forth. So shall I. I shall last for a while, or for a for. I shall last anyway, to tell the tale. I shall tell you my tale. I was born; it is a tale in its own right. I lived – another tale. I died – another tale because I have not died. Never ever. They tell tales and I do not know what they talk about. I am always talking about my eternity.

You do, you do, you do. So do I. The result? Doing, doing, doing. Undoing, undoing, undoing. Nothing doing of course. And that starts once more, again, again. You live, don't you? I live as well, as badly. You say whatever you wish; I shall be your words. You say, 'Scoundrel.' I am a scoundrel, and so on and so forth. But I am not you. I live here, in my room, in my niche. And I repulse this and that. I am not repulsed by anything, by filthy conditions or anything else. I go on, I go on. I am not repulsed. I am pulsed by my own pulse that regulates my life and its temperature. I am pulsed and waltzed. A waltz macabre, the waltz I danced once in Vienna. I cannot dance but I danced that waltz, just once. I danced my life.

I think, I think, whatever you say or think. There is one word in my brain, mind. This word is 'world', but it does not mean there is a world. There is nothing and I know that. That is a word I know; 'know' is another word I know. I know two words: 'know that.' I also know the word 'I'. That does not help me. I do not know whether this 'I' knows anything or not. I do not know whether this 'I' is 'this I' or 'that I'. Perhaps it is nothing. It is better to use the word 'nothing' that I like. I also like the word 'which', and the word 'witch'. Let us live together until something comes. I shall live with the witch and with with. Unless something contradicts me. What can contradict me? The universe? God? Sleep, my dears. Sleep, sleep. Sweet dreams!

Music tells us too much, without saying anything. It just plays. Play on, play on, play on. It stops and everything becomes music – not only the air where the Aeolian harp displays its emotions in public. Even a wall becomes music – not only Pink Floyd’s wall. To live, to die. Even death is music and your requiem is being played already. You listen to it but do not identify with the sounds. You think it is nature that died before the beginning of the piece – an hour ago. Perhaps the universe is dead too. Only you have survived this cataclysm. You listen to its aftermath – to the requiem, to the notes that do not know what they are. They are dust and ashes. And stardust, and earthdust, and helldust, and so on. You are listening to dust.

The music is nothing but beats. A beat, a beat, a beat. A melody somewhere, up there. Down here there are only beats, upbeats, downbeats. Upbeats are also below sea level, below life level. Nothing but a *danse macabre*. Harshness, strictness, sternness. But if you write sternness with one ‘n’, you may find a loophole in the cosmic laws or their absence. A legal, an illegal loophole. A blue hole, a rose loop. A rest, an ice-cream. A glass of water. Another sky, a distant sky; or a close sky, a very close sky. You can touch it, for it is within your reach. You touch it and hear an infinite melody; and an infinite harmony. No more beats. Isolde is singing and you are dead of course. But you listen to her song. You will always listen to it. Everlastingly.

I’ve not been here, I’ve not been there, I’ve not been in between. I’ve not been within the zero either; nor outside it. Where have you been? Here, there, anywhere. Don’t ask me anything. Don’t answer me either. How calm it is outside and inside. I no longer know what is outside and inside. They are identical twins – like the ups and downs. All is in the cosmic mirror; all is all and nothing. So am I. I am nothing and everybody. I don’t want to be everybody. Let me be myself, or just self, or my, or y. I’ll be y if you allow me to be anything, either y or m. All right, I am m, I am n. I am right. And I go, go, because you have to go somewhere if you want to live. You have to go to the other life, to the underworld, to the aboveworld. Go, go, go. Leave me alone. I’ll go to bed. I’ll go to bad and evil. To vile, for a while.

What is Time? What is not Time? I despise Time and nots related to it. All right, this is a second; this is another second. There are two seconds, three seconds. They go on; so do I. And I don’t know anything, as Socrates says and said. All right, I don’t know anything except that seconds go and go. They go there and everywhere. I can’t stop them; no one can. Mephistopheles is not there so you can’t say, ‘Stop this moment or I’ll kill you.’ Nothing stops, no one kills. That is what they call the ‘status quo’, I suppose. I call it quo, just quo. And I go where I can go – where to – with this quo which is my passport. If they wish to know who I am I show them my passport and they say, ‘Welcome Mr Quo.’ I am quo, qui, qua. I am just A. Or I. I am I and I do whatever I can to assert myself. I, I, I. Why, why, why. Quo, uo, o. Y, y, y. Z, z, z. The end of the T, e, t, h, e, r. The beginning.

They attack you stealthily but your happiness remains intact because you are a stoic and nothing can influence your private state of affairs, let alone your state of mind which has not budged for many years. Your mind does not budge from where it stands so you often wonder whether it stands or lies, for no one – and your mind is one, not a mere object – can remain in this position and posture for a long time without getting the fidgets. Even when you are lying on your bed you get the fidgets sooner or later, whereas if you stand for an hour or so – in a Russian church, for instance – you get the fidgets and collapse unless someone holds you in an upright position, patting you on the shoulder all the while. Don't, don't, don't, don't, don't!

You say, you say nothing. I listen, I do not. I do not, I not. Please tell me what truth you're speaking of now. You've told thousands of truths, but now I wish to know the only truth you can find anywhere, everywhere. Nothing but, nothing but. I find but and nothing, but not the truth. I find nothing at all, not even 'at', let alone 'all'. I wish I could, I wish I would. I don't wish anything. I wish anything, anything. That is the truth I've been looking for. I've been looking for anything and I've found it. Here is anything; it looks like nothing or everything. It doesn't look at all. Only a prayer can help you now. Or myself. So I kneel down and pray. I am myself, I am a prayer, I am God and His angels. I am a man.

Only I know the extent of the losses. Suppose I am summoned to the court where the Last Verdict has to be pronounced. The Court of the Last Judgement. It is not one's sins and virtues they single out for their consideration. What they care about is the beauty of life. You narrate a few episodes from it. They say, 'It's not important. Let's leave it out.' They keep a tiny fraction of what you actually experienced. In the Hereafter you are assigned an area where beauty does not have pride of place. Let me have my beautiful ugliness, their beautiful ugliness. You also know the extent of the losses, You, Thou, Now. Now you know everything: my losses, my gains, my games, my vains. Sleep sound, the same to you.

This earth. Does it deserve the capital E? It does, so I say, 'This is the Earth.' Yes, I was born, I am dying. So what? What can Plato and Heidegger say on the subject, on the matter, on the 'S' and 'M'? They can say 'S'; they can say 'M'. They can say whatever they want. I don't say anything. I just sit in front of S's, M's, N's and so on. I'll always sit in front of 'so on'. 'On' is 'he' in Russian. So I'll sit in front of 'so'. We'll look at each other. We'll look at others as well. But we'll mainly look at each other. So, so, so. I like you more than 'he', 'we' and 'she'. I've never liked *them*. Come closer, my dear. Come, come. Come, my dear So. You are just so-and-so. Never mind. Come, my dear so-and-so, my dear and. We'll live together – always, always. And we'll live ever after, won't we? And, and, and, and, and.

Losing, losing. Losing memory, mem, ory. I've lost yesterday, let alone my childhood. Where was I born? There, there, there. Not here anyway. I was born ere. Why do letters forsake me? I have no father, no mother, no god. I've got only letters. Why do *they* forsake me? Crucify me, if you wish. Do you

know what I'll say on the Cross? I'll speak to letters, not to you, to my fathers and mothers. I'll say to the letters, 'Why have you forsaken me?' I'll say so in Hebrew, in Aramaic, Armenian. I'll say so and you'll answer me. You'll say, 'You are my son, my only son. Come to my abode. Forget humans and their troubles. Come, come.' And I'll go. I'll reach my Father's abode and thank Him for everything. And I'll fall asleep on His lap. Forever.

You are my god. So am I. I mean I am your god. So what? All right, we are gods, all of us. There are only gods around, gods, supermen and superwomen. What shall we do? We should marry them, all of them. And we'll become supergods, why not? Why not? All right, we are supergods and we create light and so on. We create Adam and Superadam. We also create an UnderEve and an UperunderEve. And then they accuse us of being misogynists. So we create UP, UP, UP, UP, UP; nothing else. I am lost. Help me, my dear UP. You are not my dear. Please be an ear, just an ear. Hear me, hear me. I am not your son; nor your nephew. But I am here, I am there, I am everywhere. So are you: you are everywhere. Help me, even if I'm not there.

Still movements. They are still and they are still on. I am not Marguerite who was burnt at stake. I am perhaps Mephistopheles, for I would like old people to find their youth, vigour, love. Of course they love their enemies and the poor; but they may love maidens, Marguerites. I still move; another still life, if you wish. I do move; and I remain where I am. I am my own still life or moving life. I am an apple that is moving around. I am an apple painted by Cezanne or someone else. Someone paints everything and you become an apple, a vase. I am still; I am an object. I do not meditate upon Creation, and I am of no use to anyone. I am useless and motionless. And Marguerite is burning somewhere, perhaps in my fireplace. Another phoenix.

What a pity I am not a composer. I have to write: 'God, angles, paradises, dice, mice, thrice, witch.' Music says everything in the space of a few minutes. You listen to microcosm, macrocosm. Only one letter separates them. This letter is in the domain of literature. In music all of them coincide and you become the universe in no time at all. Just a few bars or no bars. One harmony. Bartok wrote about himself, his loves, his death. At the same time he wrote about the death of our civilisation – within the same bars. And I type out: 'Paradise, angels, God, Hell, Satan, wars, mortuaries, joy, in seventh heaven.' If you are a composer, you put all these heavens and hells together: 'sixth heaven,' 'second hell'. Within a few bars; within one chord. And writers have too many strings.

Not to say anything. You feel, you feel, you do not. You walk, you walk, you are a somnambulist. Or not at all. You are just a wok. You say to yourself, 'Heat some oil in a wok, then add the vegetables and stir-fry for two minutes.' It would be nice to welcome vegetables, oil, the Earth. You stir-fry the Earth for two minutes. It becomes the moon or something else. Jupiter, for instance. I am a walk, a wok,

Jupiter. And suddenly all this is seen from another point of view. The decline of empires, bodies, souls. Even souls decline and go to pot. You let your garden go to pot this summer or any other summer; the same goes for your soul. All of them go to pot; so do you. So do I. And then I go for a walk and for all other walks and talks. Talking to myself.

And my fatigue? I do not talk about it because I do not wish to tire it. Even doing the garden tires me these days, especially that I do not do the garden. But when I look at my gardener, I realise he is tired, whereupon I feel tired. When someone yawns in your presence, you yawn too: everyone knows that. Even village idiots know that because they yawn all the time. My garden is tired too; four trees are dead and my gardener will cut them down this autumn. What about my body? Will he cut it down? To size? I should ask him to do it. Usually he does whatever I ask him to do. I am the Tree of Life and the forbidden fruit; and the allowed fruit. I am all fruit and all trees. You remove all of them and live in Paradise.

To write or not to write. To die or not to die. To not to die or to die and not. You answer, 'Yes, yes,' 'Not, not,' 'A note, a note.' Music answers all questions. You ask a question and music answers, 'C Major' or 'Rondo'. And you accept this answer because there are no other answers in the universe or in other universes or verses. 'Rondo,' 'Variations,' 'Codas,' 'Finales'. There are so many finales one doubts if there are any beginnings. In music you go to the end. And if the end that everyone expects does not come, everybody says, 'Unfinished, unfinished.' Music is always finished; so is your life. God loves you so much He picks you up and takes you to His abode. But you die all the same. You say whatever you wish; you die. And your body talks about your death in your coffin. So does your soul. Outside?

I have done my job; now destiny needs to do its job. I have done everything I can do under the circumstances. I can go no further, as Shakespeare put it. Time goes somewhere; I am not time. I wonder from which source time gets all this energy. It is always going further and further. Not higher and higher, mind you. And destiny does not go anywhere. Sometimes it puts its foot down. It can also put something else down. The main thing is to put something down to stamp your life, your life's passport. Once it is stamped, you can go on. In my life nothing has been stamped and I wander from one room to another, without going any further. I have done my job; and other people's jobs. I have done many jobs. Why does Job always come to mind? Because I am not Job. I am one of his friends.

Tomorrow you go somewhere. You know that tomorrow is elsewhere. And what if it rains in torrents? I fear accidents and my car. It may disobey my commands if it rains. I shall not see anything except the rain. I might hear the music of the spheres, but this music will lead me nowhere except Hell or Purgatory. Why should I spend my time in Hell – alongside my car? I do not know why I like the verb 'subside'. I

hope the violence will soon subside. This violence is everywhere, as usual. Oddly enough, it is the same violence everywhere. It is probably an archetype of violence. And what about a pain in my foot? It has subsided. All my pains have subsided: abdominal pain, abominable pain, chest pains – replaced by abdominal joy, chest joys.

Music comes. What does it say? It says nothing, as usual: Stravinsky told us that. It says it is music. All right. We welcome it and say to it as often as we can, ‘Come, come.’ We say, ‘Right, wrong, any, many. But whatever you say is true. We need this truth, this harmony.’ We receive this harmony and listen to it. We hear words or rather letters, ‘A-A-A-A-A-.’ ‘B-B-B-B-B.’ This is harmony. What about melody? It is this, ‘AZERTYUIOPQSDFGHJ.’ An infinite melody. Leave me alone. I am not a Christian martyr: I have not suffered that much. I am on a beach, looking for beautiful pebbles. I find them and put them in my plastic bag. I do not walk on water; I use boats, rowing, sailing boats. I go to the end, whatever it is. I shall always go to the end, to AZERTYU. To U, to U, to U.

I take two paces forwards or backwards. I am much happier if I take three paces forwards. But I prefer to take four paces backwards. And they take me somewhere, or where, or nowhere. I take steps and they take my body, for they have nothing else to take. I let them do what they wish. These steps – or any other steps – take me there, there, there; and I have no idea what point they are taking me to. Nor do I know what point I am at today, and it goes without saying. Just two steps. Grant me this favour. I shall take them, or other steps. I shall do whatever you like. I shall do whatever *they* like. But they do not like anything; they are in love with themselves. And I am here, taking steps and maps, trying to ascertain my whereabouts, as they say. And they say nothing. I go on walking, taking, giving, missing. They say nothing.

Another routine, another day. It is the D-Day landing or the D-Day ending. This day is as pure as the sky, but the sky is impure. What do you want? A pure sky, a pure month of May? You have it and it is as organic as a carrot you buy in your favourite shop. You buy this month of May and you can also buy another month of May, or another month of October. You buy everything and time is on your dinner table now; and also on your other tables. What can you do with it? You cannot eat it because it will eat you before you start eating it. So you eat a month of May and you drink as much as you can to forget both May and Day. D-Day, T-Day. Another tea party? Green, black, white, red? So many teas and T-shirts. They are the principle of enlightenment. Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful.

Today is D-Day, M-Month, Y-Year and suddenly you realise that all your efforts have been wasted on trifles, not on truffles, and so your struggle for life is all over, even if you continue to live and even enjoy your life to the utmost. You are even able to enjoy the newspaper you are reading, although you think that this day and age are rotten, both of them; and you are not fond of rotten meat and rotten life

in general, even if all of them are not rotten to the core. All right, they are rotten to the surface and you see a series of yellow and brown spots whenever you happen to look around while drinking a glass of beer. Beer is good for your health on condition that you drink it in moderation; the same goes for your life.

You design a smaller ball to reduce injuries for female soccer players and you make a big profit from selling this ball or rather these balls to those who are in charge of this sport and these women. The ball is very small and the women you encounter everywhere, even in the streets adjacent to your house, congratulate you on having conceived and manufactured this ball. They say to you, 'What a beautiful ball you have made in your workshop and in your factories. How nice, how nice! Now we'll play our games from morning till night, from night till morning.' From time to eternity and vice versa. From vice to versa and from versa to vice. From vice to sin, from sin to wise. From wise to nice. From nice to nice – this is the end of the road.

A friend says, 'I've been looking at these clouds for hours. That is death.' Not at all. Death is a rupture, the negation of life. There is the Cross and you are bearing it. You are on this Cross. It is the same Cross. There are no other crosses. You are alone, forsaken. You are dead and there are no clouds either in the sky or elsewhere. You are not looking at a cloud. You are not looking at anything. You are dead. You cannot see anything, not even a tiny cloud. There are many clouds but you do not see them. There are suns and moons; you do not see them either. And the toys you played with in your childhood and youth? You do not see them. And then you see everything. You do not need to touch yourself.

Does the word know what it says? Does it need to know itself? Does it feel, does it speak? The word does not speak. You speak, talking all the time. History talks. It is. Everything is history now. It has been history for 20 centuries. Of course. Everyone knows that. Everyone repeats that. But history does not repeat this or that. It may repeat itself; it often does. So does death. You may call it what you wish. Death is cliché-ridden. The rest is just ridden. And one wonders if there is a rest to speak of. You write home about all this and your home writes saying it knows all this, all that. All revolutions, all dissolutions. All crosses. And you say there is only one cross, the Cross. You are right; history is wrong. They are rightwrong. They are wrongright.

And they are not. They are a whirlwind. And the whirlwind is they, them. You are they and you arise from the chaos which is primordial or not primordial. It is just *mord*, a dial. Your time goes; so do you. You are not even a dial that stays where it is. Something turns, your head perhaps. Perhaps something and someone turn. They turn and measure Time. They measure everything: space, mess, death. Death is a piece of wood 2' by 2'. Or 3' by 3'. You are 2, 3. You are 4, for all I know. You are this, this. And I

am the rest as well. And the rest is Horror. And the rest is Happiness. No rest. All is Happiness and Horror. And you say to yourself, 'I am my own hand. I shake it and am at peace. At peace. At peace.'

They are what they are, like all others. A pain is also a pain, nothing else. It is not a joy unless there are joys elsewhere, different joys. Pains and joys must live together in a mansion; and they dine together, assuming they may dine and live. They do live and I say, 'This is my pain. It's alive. I wish it could die, but it lives. At least something lives and is eternal.' What is not eternal is not pain and one may wonder what it is. It is some pleasure or other, and one wonders if this pleasure is other or some. Perhaps it is none and one accepts this definition. And I go through this definition to the end of the world which is not endless. It is not the world.

He brings a sword and cuts a lot of heads off. Off with his or her head. They fall down or fly off. They are no longer bodies so they fly or swim. And they talk to each other saying, 'I love you, I love you, I love.' They turn other cheeks and other heads, for every head has a few heads and several minds. All these minds and brains turn, and one might say they are dancing. They are not. They turn and join eternity, for they turn eternally. They join the club and the club says, 'Welcome. Please drink three bottles of champagne.' And all heads drink these bottles and turn even faster. They become planets. That is what they call the 'universe' or 'life'. And every life features a sword and a head. No champagne; just a few stars.

And once again it is not; not even the sword. It is there but it cuts nothing. And heads look at you and anybody. They say nothing; they just look at you, at your walls, other walls. You remove these heads from where they are but they return. And they look at you. You end up looking at them. And you create a look, the look. An eye looking at you. An ear listening to you. You say, 'I'm here, I'm here.' And the ear says, 'I'm ear, I'm ear.' And don't you? Won't you? You will and do. You are God knows what. You are just the beginning of a poem. And this poem begins like this, 'I am a poem. I am a rhyme. I am a meter. I am the truth. I am an angel. I am, I am.' I am too. I am sitting in this room. This room is, is; I am in this room.

I do not recognise. Should I recognise anything? I do not. I do not go either; nor do I stay. I may, may. You do not. I do not recognise this month of May. It is August. Let us sleep; no sleep. Let us die; no die. And I, and I, until anything further, further education. They will tell me I shall live with my body. Well, I shall live without it: only my soul will live and my spiritual, and my glorified. I will what I will; so will You. We all will and live. And if we do not, we do not. We just look at our own death and do not say anything. We just look instead of saying, 'It is death, death.' And we listen and hear. We hear, 'Death, death, life, life.' And we hear one note. And we hear, 'I'm D Major. I'm your *Missa Solemnis*.'

It is not what I think, if I think at all in spite of all these thoughts. I do not think and thinking will never come unless I begin to think in earnest. I am not earnest and do not think. I go towards a tree and sit under one of the branches I love and cherish. If you have no children, you can cherish branches and leaves. Even dead leaves are beautiful – even more so than live leaves, love leaves. I write on a tree, ‘I love you’ and no one answers except a few birds. They say, ‘I, I,’ and ‘too, too’. Birds love you. They have no clothes but they love humans. And they fly whenever they are cold. They are cold, stone-cold. You can throw birds at harlots.

It is not what you think and you do not think at all. And your inner peace lasts, and the rest lasts as well; as if there was a rest or whatever rests of it. It is I and there is another I in front of my face. We talk about eternity where we shall live for a few seconds. And that is you and God and not. And I listen to eternity or infinity and answer all this nonsense, ‘I am I and am am I.’ And this goes and things are as obscure as ever. Except that I am not ever. I am never ever or ever, ever, ever ever

II

If we treat the world and whatever swarms in it as playthings, we are supposed to play with them like Charlie Chaplin does in the film *The Dictator*, tossing and turning a globe. ‘*Ludic*,’ as they say in the States. In the second half of the 20th century, this word was quite fashionable in France. Intellectuals played with words and notions as they went through the motions. At last humanity was able to play with the globe because, at the end of the 20th century, there was no more history. We used to play war games, killing millions of people. What about today, yesterday? For a while we played with the globe that was cracking under our pressure. Millions of people have fallen into the fissures. Now we are playing with the fissures that continue to grow.

You deny the denial of the flesh. Then you deny the flesh itself, for life is a series of denials. Someone says to you, ‘Deny This.’ ‘If I did what you ask,’ you answer, ‘it would be a denial of everything I stand for.’ Suddenly you realise you do not stand for anything. You do not even know if you are standing or lying or flying like a balloon: birds fly far more beautifully. You deny the assertion that your flight is inferior to that of birds. But they continue to fly and you fall badly and break your leg. Then you fall under a bus and break everything. You stubbornly deny the wreckage of your body. You say this word cannot be applied to a human. ‘I’m not a car,’ you say. Yet the wreckage of your body has been scattered all over the roadside.

So many rivers that know where they are flowing. Where to? Where to? Or they know nothing. As usual, you say one thing and then express serious doubts about the accuracy of your statement. Of course rivers know nothing: they are driven by the blindness and obstinacy of wills among which one finds a lot of wills to powers and destructions, a multitude of wills to births and rebirths. And there are death impulses, birth impulses and many returns to the scenes of all crimes. The rivers of blood seem to follow the same itineraries, for the same forces or powers drive them somewhere – to the sea of mud. And then you say to yourself, ‘They do know where they’re flowing. They’re flowing to the City of the Sun, to the City of the Moon and to the City of Jupiter.’ And they continue to flow and follow whatever there is to follow.

There is such a thing as a shooting star. This star shoots itself and falls down, which is logical and natural. It is also natural to apply one word to various objects or notions because our language, as Lacan points out, lies at the root of all problems. Where does the high crime rate have its roots? In unemployment, in poverty? Hardly. It is our language – or any other language – that we should single out from other phenomena, pointing the finger at words, letters and even hyphens. It is tempting to blame television for the increase in crime. We hear four-letter words and a series of loud bangs. And we *see* these bangs. Shooting the stars, shooting to kill. And a myriad of shooting stars cover the Earth.

She came in; she went out. She came in and did not go out. They call it what they wish: it might be love, death, a masterpiece of lovemaking. One falls in love; another falls in life or in death. Like Don José,

for instance. Carmen was his life, death, opium, opponent. ‘So you don’t love me any more?’ ‘No, I don’t.’ *Non, je ne t’aime plus*. Why is it my symbol of love? No more love. No love at all. Music helps a lot in these matters. In real life you say, ‘I don’t love you,’ and you do not get killed for that. But in an opera, a real one, you always get killed for these ‘nes’, ‘nos’. How can one dare to love after listening to Carmen? Either you are afraid or murder the woman who says, ‘No’, ‘*Niet*’. In this case, she will not go out.

One wonders if this is a real love or not. Don José speaks of his disgrace and shame. Carmen and her lover will laugh at him. Either you love and are loved in return or you are laughed at. You are still in love, but there is no point in loving anybody after what has happened. Anyway, you can love only one woman; and she has already betrayed you. It is logical, almost mathematical – or geometrical. We are dealing with an eternal triangle. And you prefer an eternal angle. So you kill your rival. Or you prefer an eternal straight line. Then you kill them both and go your way. You go as far as the ‘other skies’, as Don José puts it. *Sous d’autres cieux*. Well, there is enough room for your straight line in other skies, in other heavens, on other earths.

And only once something is likely to happen. Not only on account of time: time does not count. What counts is *once*. It is not in a class of its own; nor is it a unique moment, as some poets say. There are many moments like that, but they happen only once. All humans are alike; so are moments. But somehow they are different. Not a world of difference; just a tiny fraction. Everything happens only once, not twice – for once, I am not tempted to add twice. No, only once. This once is perhaps twice; or infinity. Not eternity. Just an infinity of onces that means a finitude of twices. They amount to the same one thing. And this thing is neither time nor space. This thing both counts and does not. One can count it; yet it is uncountable.

You break every precious stone. What remains is far more precious, as every sage knows. Precious stones are the pebbles you find on the seashore; yet the pebbles are far more precious. Precious thoughts are always empty. Not *shallow*, mind you; they are just *empty*. No content, just a thought. You could give everybody a bear hug but your eyes are not accustomed to the outer world. Nor do they see the inner world: they see nothing. And this vision is precious – more precious than all Indian diamonds or the rubies you can find in English poems and novels. You find them in your invisible self that does not know what it sees. It does not even see all these Brahmans they speak of day in day out. It sees only the precious. And the precious is the unprecious. Or the underprecious.

One goes towards others. Sometimes one strokes their cheeks; sometimes one does not. One just looks at others. But one does so benevolently. One might stroke others’ cheeks without striking them previously or afterwards. So one is kind and accepts everybody and everything on its own terms. On

their terms, needless to say. But one does not love people to the point of forgetting oneself and the universe. One has already forgotten a huge part of the universe. One has not forgotten the other part of it. So one stands in the middle of it all and looks benevolently at everyone, everything, every plant, every ant. One studies the behaviour of ants and thinks it is good: ants are at one with each other. Their behaviour is an object lesson in how one must live and prosper.

There are other things. Not other *beings*, perish the thought! Things, things. You pick them up; you cannot pick up humans unless they are paralysed. Things are always paralysed: their comas are as ordinary as storms and tsunamis. So you pick them up and put them down on your chest of drawers and other pieces of furniture. They look nice, don't they? You pick up other things and put them *under* your chairs, armchairs and so on. They do not look. They look neither up nor down. And there are no middles for them. Nor do you look for them – up or down, as the case may be. No one and nothing look. There are inner worlds that should be taken into consideration. But no one and nothing look at them either. Everyone and everything look at neither.

No instrument can break you. You cannot break yourself, for you are unbreakable and unsinkable. They carry you over the sea and drop you all of a sudden. You do not sink because you do not think. If you begin to think, you fall from a great height and sink forever. And even if you fall from a small height you die of course, as a matter of course. Even if you fall from your chair, you die – that is for sure. You do fall from your chair but you do not die because you do not think. You become an angel, a blue angel, a poppy-coloured angel. You become a poppy and an angel: two heads are better than one. The poppy has a head; so does the angel. Three heads are better than two. So they look for a third head and find it. They put their heads together and think of a solution to universal problems.

You are more than love, for you are a superman. Every human should love other humans as his or her brothers; and mothers. But you are *more* than love; you love your fathers and sisters. And probably their Misters; and their Masters. You are more than love, for love is limited. But you can love all the Misters and Masters and Mistresses. All these Misters have Mistresses and you can love them all, although even Christians cannot shower these creatures with presents. You shower, shower, shower. Then you recall that you should be more than love, like Jesus and the Bodhicitta. So you increase the power of your shower and become another god. Or perhaps the *only* God. And don't forget that your shower should be cold now and then – whenever she wears a miniskirt.

The solution is there, not anywhere else. So they go there and find the solution. But they have no idea to what subject or object this solution can be applied. There are situations and they apply this solution – and many other solutions – to these situations. The situations go on and disappear; there are other situations. They also require solutions and these solutions are up there – near God and His heavenly

escort. The escort drops a number of solutions; they fall on hill and dale. And we find these solutions because they are not on the top of our highest mountain. They are under our feet, as usual. They are situated along our garden paths. They are not at the bottom of our nearest ravine. They reflect the Middle Way: they are on our dinner table.

On the brink of whatever, of soever. One foot in the grave; the other in another grave. Crawling from one grave to another. These graves open and close. Whatever one sees is not death; nor is it another life. It is another wife, another son, daughter, aunt. It is a lake. It is whatever one is looking at. And the whatever has never looked at anyone. It must be eternal or semi-eternal; a monolith, a monument. Time, space, any word. You close your eyes from time to time, from space to space. You open them. Looking at a madrigal. It is better to *look* at music. You see sounds, melodies, harmonies. The harmonies become your heart, not your love. Just your heart, your body. You look at your body; face to face.

Let us come back to the main subject which is death, as everyone knows. Death is the main subject; other subjects are not main. You have love, beauty, hate and many other subjects. Some of these subjects matter, others do not. You come back to some of them and realise there is no use dealing with them. So you deal only with the main subject. As long as we live, the main subject is not death; it is life. Anyway, the main thing is not to worry. You do not worry and die in due course. If you do not, you *live* in due course. And this due course is your main subject. You come back to it very often, otherwise you would not live. You must go back to the 'main' in order to survive. And also to 'due'; and to 'course'. You come back and survive.

Let us go forward: it is better than going back, whatever subjects, matters and so on. If one goes forward, one goes towards the future which is always superior to the past. Everything is superior to the past, even the present; even this moment is superior to Homer. And Homer is inferior to days and years to come. They come and one realises that they are superior to Homer, Dante and Shakespeare. They seem to hang over Bach and Beethoven. The hanging gardens of the future. And one thinks about Semiramis; one dreams. What is beauty? Her Hanging Gardens, her face. What about Cleopatra? Another beauty. How many beauties are there in the world? Two. And the beauty of your face, whoever you are?

Whenever one hears 'Door' or 'Gate', one rushes towards this object in the hope of finding a garden inside – happiness, in other words. There are paradises beyond every hole: even beyond a black hole one may find happiness on condition that one does not spend too much time *inside* the black hole. Look at the children. They have just crawled through an opening in the fence. They are singing now, singing and dancing. They know nothing about Hell and its Gate. They might have landed up in Hell, but they continue to dance as if they were in Paradise. The chief problem we have in the universe is the spread of our disease. This disease is called knowledge. We know too much about Hell, Purgatory and Paradise.

Instead of enjoying ourselves, we say, 'We're in Hell.' Why not just say, 'We are here,' or 'Here we are'?

If asked, 'What is your faith?' a Buddhist may answer, 'The Pure Land.' A Christian speaks at length about Jesus Christ and the Cross. Why not follow the Buddhist's example? In The Pure Land there is enough room for our God and all other gods. They are all pure and consequently have always lived in The Pure Land. Even war-oriented gods are pure, for they are gods. Some of them are mortal and their corpses cannot be found within the bounds of The Pure Land. Even in his lifetime, a mortal god is excluded from the community of the Pure Land – on account of his or her impurity. But the immortals, saints and heroes have always lived in The Pure Land. The others are confined to The Impure Land and no filter will ever remove the impurities lodged in their blood.

So many people identify with the universe; yet only some of them are versed in Buddhism and Hinduism. If you are at the head of a multi-million-pound empire, you may believe you also govern the Holy Roman Empire. And of course you are far more omnipotent than the Pope. So you are also the head of the Roman Catholic Church and all other churches. For many businesswomen, your empire is a place of pilgrimage. You are God, in other words. His most devoted fans think of Elvis Presley as a sort of god. But you are much wealthier than Elvis. All over the world men and women envy the fabulous wealth you have amassed. At some point you even financed the Star-Wars project. So you have a huge amount of influence over the stars. It is little wonder that you identify with them.

I am often warned against making hasty decisions. The point is I do not make *any* decisions, either hasty or unhasty. I often hear, 'Now you know all the facts, you can make an informed choice.' But I do not make any choice either. If you think you know all the facts, you are mistaken. There are butterflies in the world where you live and labour, and they flutter their wings. And what about that white bird over there? This white bird alighted on a wire and fluttered its wings; whereupon some of the facts you know altered their lifestyles, so to speak. Anyway these numerous wings alter your perception of reality – on a regular basis. So I have no wish to commit myself. I am always in between two decisions, two choices. I am like that white bird poised on a wire. But I do not flutter my wings.

We respond creatively to the situations we deal with in everyday life, and even beyond this life – during our nocturnal journeys into the Great Beyond. Of course we do not have to respond to them either creatively or otherwise. We can just remain in our favourite deckchair, staring up at the stars. A kind of peacefulness overcomes you as you begin to count them. Isn't this a Taoist response to any situation? On the other hand, you had better respond *creatively*, if pursued by Jack the Ripper. In this case, no deckchair will ever get you off the hook. Why not let the Ripper rip you into shreds? Try to imagine that

your body is made up of basil leaves – as if you were an Arcimboldo painting. Then say to the Ripper, ‘Rip the basil leaves into pieces and sprinkle them over a salad.’

You cannot observe thoughts. As soon as you think, ‘Here’s a thought,’ your former thought recedes into the distance and becomes invisible. You wonder what thought you had in mind when you said, ‘Here’s a thought.’ Your memory remains silent over the issue. And if, all of a sudden, the first thought reappears, it finds itself surrounded by a lot of thoughts such as, ‘What was I thinking about?’ ‘Memory can play tricks on you.’ ‘I thought this thought would be engraved on my memory forever.’ ‘To err is human.’ ‘I’m too self-confident and arrogant.’ ‘The demon drink.’ ‘The effects of alcohol on short-term memory, let alone on long-term memory.’ You no longer care about the very first thought. ‘No alcohol for at least six months. Here’s a thought.’ Once more you forget everything.

Whatever you do, you cannot remain silent. You decide not to speak, not a single word. You also decide to produce no sounds whatsoever, given that any sound gives rise to a misunderstanding. But there are many other languages and you may use them unintentionally, against your will. What about your body language, for instance? How to silence it? Your friends and colleagues would be eager to deduce from your gestures whatever suits them and their purposes. They would say, ‘I could tell from his body language that he was very embarrassed/frightened/petrified.’ They would read many crimes into your grimaces. The only way to remain silent is to allow your nervous disorders to produce paralysis. But paralysis speaks volumes about human misery.

Images lead us astray and we cannot see God, if we see an image of God. You have to switch the lights off if you wish to get in touch with the Almighty. Last night, the city centre was plunged into darkness by a power cut. Many people saw God, but a number of them saw the Prince of Darkness. Of course they did not know they were dealing with this person; they thought they saw the God of Light. To see Him, they thought, the Earth should be plunged into darkness. So they were disappointed when the lights came back on. They saw many images – that of the Prince of Darkness, among others. There seems to be some confusion over whom one actually sees in the dark and in fairy lights. To avoid this confusion, one might coin the term ‘The God of Darkness’.

There are axioms. They are always true, even if the weather in the hills can change very quickly. But even in the hills these axioms do not change: they are independent of the weather and our moods. We are in no mood for axioms, but a lot of axioms say, ‘We are here and we’ll not go away, whatever you do.’ You put two and two together and make five instead of four. All right, you can put this down to what Wittgenstein calls ‘my language games’. Axioms do not play games: they are monuments and so command a great deal of respect. You have no alternative but to put up with them. It is hard having them

around; yet I have learnt to live with it. I live with axioms instead of living with my free will and freedom in general. Dostoevsky's characters always make five. I make four or three.

There is something odd about life but I cannot quite put my finger on it. Perhaps it is death, its eternal presence. Whatever I do, I come across death – as everybody does. Perhaps it is life itself: something is wrong with it. Perhaps it is human suffering or the human condition; or just toothache, or earache. But even if there were no aches, life would be unbearable on account of its fragility. Frailty, thy name is life. It betrays you all the time; it kills you and marries someone else. And this person lives your life. The usurper of your throne, no less. And you impersonate King Lear, going mad and dying at the end of your own tragedy. Such is life; such is eternity. You always go mad and die when you feel like living forever.

Neither...nor. That is what they call 'negative theology' – applied to humans. You are neither an animal nor a plant. You are neither an angel nor a demon, even if you *are* a demon. You are neither intelligent nor stupid unless you are really stupid. You are neither a being nor a non-being. You are neither a marionette nor a proud owner of free will. You are neither a cog in the machine nor the machine. You are neither 'neither' nor 'nor'. You are 'or' perhaps. Or just 'perhaps'. You are neither a long story nor a short one. You are not a story. If you join up the dots on the sheet of paper, you will get a picture. You are one of these dots. We have to hope and pray that you will become the picture. In due course.

Sounds come; so does silence. Why do they come? Why can't they go away, once and for all? Not death, just another life. They come and go, this is another life, yet another life. I am not here; yet I am here. And nothing is nothing. Even nothing is everything. The nothing, the everything. They are interchangeable. I interchange them and get nothing. So it is nothing after all. But 'after all' is something. Perhaps it is the after all. Everything is 'the' in this world. Sometimes you come across an 'a' but usually it is the 'the'. And the 'the' should not be allowed to dictate all the terms and conditions: it is supposed to be a democratic decision. But the 'a's' have no say in the matter. Determinism. But there are 'a', 'a's', 'no', 'I am', 'eternal harmony'.

Again that angst, this angst. It is near and not quite near. On a clear day you can see your angst in the distance. The same goes for an unclear day. Do you live within walking distance of your angst? You should find out if your angst is as near as all that. If it is very near, you cannot live. You grind your teeth in your sleep and even upon awakening. You grind your teeth round the clock. And your colleagues say, 'If he grinds his teeth, he's still alive.' So you go on grinding your teeth to survive, to live until Doomsday. You grind your teeth and life goes on; so does the show. You must grind your teeth, otherwise the universe will come to a halt. No more dancing around the sun. The universe will grind to a halt right in the middle of the road.

Just ‘no’ to everyone and everything. But how could you say ‘no’ to all of them? You see a face in front of you and say, ‘No’. All right, this face disappears. Another face turns up. You say ‘No’ to it. It disappears but is replaced by another face, another body. You do not see the whole of humanity to say ‘no’ to it, even if you are inclined to say ‘no’ to everyone. You have to see the *entire* world to say ‘no’, looking for the end of your doubts and suffering. You see only *one* face; and then *another* face. You say whatever you wish. You can say, ‘The weather is expected to remain clear for the next few days.’ Do you think the weather *will* remain clear? Do you think *you* will remain clear? Cloudy, cloudy. But you will see hundreds of stars in the clear desert sky.

Today is yesterday and all minutes are here as if they were paralysed or dead. They are half-dead, half-alive. They are zombies or something along these lines; somebody along these or those lines. There are lines and a lot of the living dead are arrayed along these lines. What can you do with these halves? You just join them, for you have nothing else to do. Of course you can go on a healthy/balanced/varied diet instead. You go on one of these diets – on all of them, to be exact. And you live forever. You half-live forever, to be exact. But you are never exact: you say whatever comes into your head. And if nothing comes, your head goes somewhere in search of something. It finds this something or another one and smiles. And falls asleep.

And so on, and on and on. You love to ramble through the fields and lanes in this part of the country; and also in other parts of the country. You ramble and crumble. The legs on which you are built are starting to crumble. You no longer ramble through cities, countries and planets. Your legs are crumbling into dust. Of course you can stand on this dust or any other dust. But can you walk on dust? Of course you can walk on dust and ashes because you *are* ashes and dust. But what about your legs and feet? Can you walk at all? Why should you walk, ramble and crumble? You are so hungry your stomach is rumbling. All right, that is enough. Listen to your stomach, to the life of your body. No eating, no meals on wheels. Listen to life and try to remember it.

Why do they always sing? They sing in churches and also during their walks up hills and down dales. They walk up and down, singing, dancing as if they were happy and gorgeous. They are happy but not gorgeous. Never mind, they think they are. They buy a few items of clothing and look gorgeous. And everything becomes beautiful. Such is our beautiful life. What else do we need? A beautiful death? No way, no way. No death on our way. Only life, songs and dances. We dance to the beat of the drums and to any other beat. There are so many beats around us. That is why we dance all the time. And sing of course. We sing two songs by Schubert, three songs by Hugo Wolf. We also sing a few hymns. We also dance a few hymns. What else can we do? We can *live* a few hymns.

According to Alan Turing, machines can have skills of learning, self-correction and communication. So can humans, apparently. What do we learn? Do we correct ourselves? All right, we are machines, nothing else. And we communicate with each other in spite of Antonioni's films. We learn how to communicate and kiss each other. And if we do not kiss correctly, we correct our kisses and they become politically and humanly correct. And humanly possible. Now we embrace each other heartily and kiss correctly. So much for communication. But what do we learn? Grammar, the multiplication table, good manners. We learn how to multiply and replenish the universe. We also learn how to decrease. We have decreased sharply this year.

Nothing has been done. All my life I have tried to do something. There are things, and things, and bodies. Some bodies, other bodies. So what? A body is in front of you, under you. You do with it whatever is permitted by law or by this body. So both the law and body permit you to do this and that. You do this but you wish to do more than this and that. You wish to do thisthatthisthat. But the body says, 'I allow you to do this but even I draw the line at doing everything.' So you do not do everything. You remain in between nothing, something, everything, things and bodies. They are all in front of you and in your room, but you are not permitted to do this and that. Nor are you permitted to do that and this. You do 'is' and 'at'.

The world comes to you through sounds, but you cannot hear half of them. The sounds you do hear do not sound, so you try to see them. You do not see them; nor do you smell them. The world is outside your psyche or whatever you call it. You do not call it anything; you wish to come to terms with the world. You wish to *touch* it. You do touch it. So what? Are you satisfied? You touch, smell, see, hear. Are you happy? Yes, you are happy because you should be happy, otherwise it is not worth living on Earth or even under it. So you live on it and under it; and you are happy. So is the Earth. Everyone and everything are happy because happiness is a sort of master key: it opens many pleasures. And only pleasures count in one's life; and even beyond it.

According to Leibniz, I am identical with myself. What a pity! I wish I could be different from myself. Why should I bear with myself? Living my life places a large psychological burden on my mind, soul and so on. But I cannot wriggle free because I am identical to the man who suffers from a great many burdens. Suppose I am *not* identical with myself. I jettison a few burdens and feel much better. 'Not' is a very useful word – under the circumstances. I can even get rid of *all* my burdens because a happy man is not identical with an unhappy one. I can get rid of the unhappy man in the twinkling of an eye. Why should I care about him? He is not my neighbour to whom I owe a lot of love. So I am allowed to kill him. I have always believed that happiness counts more than a sense of self.

I have a problem and I cannot solve it. After a while I solve it, but my life is still my life. What is life minus one problem? Life. What can you do about it, with it? Without it? What is life minus life? You missed out a zero when you resolved to kill yourself. So now you have a zero on your hands. What can you do with this zero? You can multiply it. Once again you get a zero, a multitude of zeroes. Can you replenish the Earth with zeroes? You can. You replenish the Earth with zeroes and realise that the Earth is as round as a zero. It has always looked like a zero. Once again you get a zero and you cannot say you have broken new ground. Nor have you broken old ground. You have broken nothing. Except your life, except your life.

If I say, 'It's raining in Spain,' this statement is true only if it *is* raining in Spain. What do I care about this rain? I like Spain very much and I even like the rain, when drinking tea on the terrace of my country house; on condition that this terrace provides some shelter from the rain. I like the sound of *some* varieties of rain: *some* of them are quite noisy and do not fit my sense of harmony. Whatever is true is suitable only if you feel comfortable and have no wish to fly to Australia. I say, 'It's raining in Spain,' but the sun shines all over the Earth. All right, I have already made myself comfortable. I cannot say I am happy because I have no idea what happiness means. Perhaps it does not mean anything except 'happiness'.

You have found a key to everything, not only to doors. You open sentences, meanings, secrets, enigmas. You crack codes and nature is made up of codes. Not only nature – everything. There are signs everywhere and you should study them to enrich your life which is too mechanical, too superficial without the meaning of these signs. This table is a sign; so is this tempest. The world is imbued with deep, religious feeling, and the signs talk to you about this feeling. Every sign is an angel in disguise; and every angel is a sign. So you study angels and come to the conclusion that there are no angels either overhead or under your feet. There are only signs. You trample all over these signs, but they do not die: signs are even more immortal than the gods.

Last month my world came tumbling down on itself. What was my world? I picked it up and looked at it closely for a while. What was it? Not only thoughts, not only bones. There was something else: it was a *world* after all. It had its rivers and mountains. It also had its shortcomings, otherwise it would not have been a world. Was it really a world? Yes, it was. I lived in a changing world and learnt to adapt. I studied it for an hour or so and then dropped it. Once again it rolled off the edge of the world and smashed. Now I am living in this world, on its edges. You are bound to roll off any edge and smash, even if this edge has nothing to do with this world. I can no longer roll off *my* edge. I do not regret it: my edge was not *the* edge.

You are here, you are not there. You are my being, my self, my limits and boundaries. I know my limits: *you* are my limits. Are you? I go towards these limits and caress them infinitely, as long as I last. I last for a while and then disappear. I forget my limits; I lose you once more. I keep losing you as if I had nothing else to do. I have nothing else to do. I lost you yesterday; I shall lose you tomorrow. I do not lose my limits, though: they are everywhere. So you are not my limits. You are perhaps my infinity. I go towards my infinity and find only infinity, nothing else. I do not find you. And it is you I need. This infinity means nothing to my body. There are other infinities no doubt, but I do not know them. I know you, your laughter, your voice.

On the brink again. No, not on the brink – in the middle of nowhere. Or in the middle of everywhere. Always in the middle as if there were no beginnings, no ends. In the end of nowhere; at the beginning of the world. The world begins and you begin with the world. ‘Synchronicity’, so to speak. You would have been better off coming into existence either later or earlier. Being born before the world: no wars, no conflicts. But you were born at the moment when God spoke about light, night and Heidegger’s Being. So you are here and everywhere because every human being is humanity. You were born; so was humanity. You will die; so will humanity and even animals. But the flora of the Balearic Islands will remain. So will Stone Age flora.

This is in store for you; so is that. Everything is in store for you. Whatever you have now is also in store for you. You think it is all over. Nothing is over. This pain is also in store for you because you will feel it tomorrow and the day after. There are pleasures of course. Why do so many boys take pleasure in torturing insects and small animals? Because they are boys and boys will be boys, whatever happens. And animals will be animals; so will insects. But you are reluctant to torture insects and big animals. So you torture no one, nothing. Where are your pleasures? A gourmet meal. You eat and look at yourself in a mirror. And you realise it is your last supper; or last breakfast. It is your last, last. And there is no least in this case. Bread and wine.

No, no, no. No matter how often you say that, you will have noes all the time. Time is a collection of noes. What can you do with time? You can add another ‘no’ to it. To space as well. You add ‘no’ to space and it vanishes into thin air. You add ‘no’ to thin air and it vanishes into another thin air. Now you know there are many thin airs, and everything can vanish into them. That is what air is for: you can vanish into it. Of course it is easy to vanish into thick *earth*, but it is far more pleasant to vanish into thin air because it is thin and air. The mountain air is wonderfully pure so you vanish into the mountain air. You can also just vanish. No air, no mountains. Just no, no, no. You have noes all the time and time has your noes.

And what if this is true? As well as the rest? Of course one can say that nothing is true and there are no things, no leftovers. But there is something, one can say. There is probably one, not two. One cake is here. What about another cake? Somewhere else, probably nowhere. 'Probably' is here too and you think you should enlarge upon this probably before it is too late. You enlarge upon it and it becomes large. All right, nothing is true, but probably is true and false. Probably is everything, until further notice. And this notice does not come. No notices come and you have to deal with probabilities. Why should you deal with anything? You are probable, possible, impossible – as impossible as any other impossibility. You are as impossible as the wine you are drinking.

This does not matter; even matters do not matter. What remains is not silence but a sort of noise. It is not a noise, properly speaking; nor is it the music of the spheres. It is the sound, the only sound one can hear either in Heaven or in Hell. In the distance we heard the silvery tinkle of a stream. No, it is not that. No streams, no tinkles; no silver either. There are no words; there are surfaces which might be words, if we let them be on their own. They are our consciousness, but they belong in another realm. That is how we set off on our journey. We realise that the noise we hear is coming from another realm; or from this realm, from another part of it. We embark upon our journey and after a while hear the silvery tinkle of a stream.

To be, to be. You are be, not bee. Your body is as tangible as the cup of tea you are holding. In a way, you are always holding your body so as not to lose it forever. But the rest escapes you; only your body remains with you and probably with others. They see your body and talk to their friends, saying, 'We saw a body tonight.' What body are they talking about? There are many bodies and nobodies; there are many words and plays and games. You play with yourself and find you are everywhere. You go somewhere and stumble upon yourself. You also stumble upon others and ancient monuments. And the Way comes – the only way you are supposed to follow. You concentrate on one point, one god – not on Aphrodite. And this god comes out of the sea.

As ever, as never. We go together to another star, another moon. Another moon shows up and we settle down on it, for want of anything better. This moon is probably better than other moons, but we have no choice; and no time to make one. We think that any moon will do as long as it is a moon and not another earth. And what if it is another earth, another life? Then we shall live this life on that moon and thank God for everything – even for the satellite where we live and suffer. We thank God and all the moons we have ever heard about, and fall asleep. Upon awakening we find a tennis ball and start playing yet another game. We kill time and the rest of the world. Our game is beautiful and we always win the World Cup. And the Underworld Cup.

‘Please, leave me alone.’ If you say that, no one will ever leave you alone – or just leave your room. Everyone will say, ‘Why? What’s the matter? We derive great satisfaction from helping other people. And you’re one of these people. What can we do for you? Do you want a glass of water? A glass of cognac? You could take out a loan to buy a car. If you have a new car, everything will be all right.’ You buy a car, a bicycle, a wheelchair, but you are not all right. You are not alone. You wish to meditate on God and on the consequences of your latest decision. But they say, ‘You’re wrong. You need to take a lot of factors into account in your decision-making. And whenever you make a decision, you take only *one* factor into account.’ You ensconce yourself in the wheelchair and disappear.

‘My God, my God.’ Why do you say that? Do you own a god? Do you own *this* God? You own only idols. You put them on your chest of drawers and admire them as you listen to Haydn’s quartets. You do not own these quartets either. Actually you do not own anything, not even yourself. You are as poor as St Francis. But you have no stigmata; so you are not as poor as St Francis. Nor are you as rich as St Francis, spiritually speaking. You are neither rich nor poor. You are neither St Francis nor St Valery. You are not the Haydn quartet you are listening to. You are not one of the idols standing on your chest of drawers. You are not even a chest of drawers. What are you? A letter you put in one of the drawers, in your chest. Many years ago.

Another piece of news; another item of old clothing. You put it on; you put everything on. You put everything down, in, into. You cannot put anything out – as long as you live. You live, you live on, away. You always go away, but you are still there, in your room, in any other room. You are rooted to the spot, to the Earth. And the Earth is rooted to you – with all her spots. You put on these spots, these earths and go somewhere, to another spot. You find this spot and think you are safe at last. You are probably at last but you are not safe. You will never be safe unless you take your leave, your French leave, Russian leave. You take all your leaves and go, go. You can run, if you wish. You do run and reach another heaven, another paradise on Earth. You sit down gingerly on a bench.

Another old song. (There are songs everywhere and many of them are as old as Adam.) You listen to it and hear, ‘Love, you, why, horrible, terrible.’ As usual, someone forsakes you and consequently you are forsaken. You are on the verge of collapse/success/tears/death/disaster/war. No, you are just on the verge of collapse, tears, death and disaster. No wars this time. An old song. Why do all these songs speak of verges? If you stay in bed, there is nothing to sing about. You just lie on your back, listening to the sound of the wind sighing in the trees. You neither sing nor talk. You listen. There are no whys, horrors, yous. You listen. It is better to listen than to sing. It is better to *not* listen than to listen. It is better to not.

You write about this and this writes about you. That is what they call ‘reciprocity’. The world cares about you and takes notice of whatever you do or not do. Or do not. The world watches you; the world

is a watchdog and it barks from time to time. This time it does not bark so you sleep like a log, a dog. You sleep like a cat and the world lets you sleep because, for once, you behave yourself. The threat of a good beating keeps you on the straight and narrow. And the world beats you very often – if you are neither straight nor narrow. The world beats you with sticks. To death, to death; if you deserve it. This time you do not deserve it. So you sleep and have a few sweet dreams. They are so sweet you believe neither your eyes nor ears. You have no faith in your dreams. You cannot move mountains.

Looking forward and backward. Looking for. For what? For whom? For oneself of course. Know thyself. You know yourself. So what? You know you fear death and life; you fear everything under the sun that you do not like, for it burns your skin whenever you expose yourself to its influence. You know that you know everything, but this knowledge does not help you to cope with anything you come across on your way to death. You look for yourself and find yourself. You find the core of yourself and also a few surfaces. You think about these surfaces and realise they are not worth thinking about. They are too shallow; so is the core of your being. Why not skip about in the field like lambs?

To get at food, you negotiate many obstacles – as squirrels do, for instance. You get your food and, after two helpings of dessert, you are at last replete. After three helpings of dessert, you are even more replete. You just say, ‘No more cake for me, thanks. I’m full.’ You are full, replete and everything else. And of course you do not go swimming on a full stomach. Now your stomach is empty so you go swimming. You swim and swim and swim. What else do you need? All you need to complete your happiness is a baby. But you cannot have a baby without a legal wife: you are a good Christian. So you find a wife who offers you a baby. And you continue to swim – not on a full stomach, though. You swim on an empty stomach, on an empty.

Any intelligence is artificial. You were born with your senses. You learnt to keep away from fireplaces and your fingers are still safe and sound. But at some point you asked yourself, ‘What is it?’ You resolved to crack the code of life. You found out that life had many codes: the more you crack, the more you get. You got many codes and you lived with them for a while. Then you got a few enigmas. You became a nutcracker. Hard nuts were your speciality and even your cup of tea. Now you know all nuts, all cracks; you no longer need to crack anything. So you lie on the floor and sleep from time to time. Isn’t this life artificial? Everything is artificial – even your sleep is artificial. Yet you swallow no sleeping pills. The floor you are lying on is artificial too. You should lie in a coffin.

The first man on Earth. The last man on Earth. These men do not matter because we do not know them. What counts is the middle man. Frankly speaking, it is not a man; it is an androgyne. If you are not an androgyne, you cannot be in the middle. But androgynes cannot multiply and replenish the Earth. So God split these androgynes right down the middle. That is how man and woman were born. Their

children were born too. Now we have too many children around. They are always hungry when they get home from school. We feed them, hoping they will feed us in their turn – when we are old and infirm. We are old and infirm. God must have split us right down the middle. We continue to have thoughts, for what it is worth. Our body does not act.

It is not useless and pointless: everything is useful. If you make a mistake, you learn your lesson. You live and learn; or you do not learn anything. You just live and this is enough, according to Montaigne. You make mistakes but you do not learn anything. You continue to make mistakes; and your mistakes make you, to some extent. You are in the making; so are your mistakes. There has been little movement in the dollar today, but elsewhere there have been a lot of movement. You do not learn anything from this movement. You are a complete ignoramus where movements are concerned. And they are concerned everywhere. You are unconcerned. You are neither a Buddhist nor a Taoist. You are just unconcerned. You follow the movement of your unconcern.

Good day, good night. All of them are good, provided they are neither days nor nights. If they are, they are not good. You might say, 'Good nothing,' for nothing is always good. Not only the lack of news is good: every nothing is good. Even nothingness is good, provided you can have a sumptuous meal inside this nothingness – washed down with two bottles of red wine. I have lived in this nothingness for many years. Now I live in everythingness. There is no such word in English. So I do not live in it and even outside it. I do not live in between these nos and everys either. Language is a trap, not a map: you get nowhere with it. You just say, 'This, toos, moos, moss.' You lapse into silence and discover lapses.

All this is far more complicated. Of course you can say that the Earth is beautiful and life marvellous. You can say whatever you wish. You wish to say something and you say it. It is better to say, 'Life is beautiful,' than to affirm that life is ugly. Many people would commit suicide if you said that life is ugly. They might kill you instead of committing suicide. Anyway, it is better to repeat, 'Beautiful, beautiful,' instead of going into detail. You do not go into detail; you go nowhere. You just say, 'Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful,' and everyone is about to kiss you. A beautiful actress, a beautiful concert, a beautiful painting. In short, life is a wedding feast. You are about to marry life itself. You are about, you are about.

Our inner grammar or drama. A child is born with this drama, grammar, mamma, grandma. At your birth you find all these mas and do not know which one to choose. You always have to choose something: this is the law of life. There are other laws but we are not concerned with them for the moment. Hopefully, we shall never be concerned with them or anything else. Well, you have to choose something because your free will means that you belong to God and are one of His creatures. You choose life and live, buying chocolate and pastries. You choose one pastry and pay no attention to others. Then

you choose another pastry, and so on. You chose a delicate floral pattern for your bedroom curtains; and for your tombstone. You choose not to speak of death.

When you are about to die, you do not see whatever will happen to you after death. You mostly think about the past and go through the emotions you have felt ever since your childhood. Of course you can say to your relatives, 'In a few hours I'll see God,' but this happens only if you happen to be St Augustine. You read a few psalms and pray, thinking about Your Saviour, Everybody's Saviour. You do not say, 'Why have you forsaken me?' You smile and think that, apart from The Saviour, you will also meet Plotinus and Racine. You do not remember your mother and numerous wives. You think about those who await you beyond the threshold of death. But you are neither Socrates nor St Augustine. So you say, 'We picked lots of strawberries, but we'd eaten half the basket by the time we got home.'

Here is a heap of sand. You play with it for while. You build two castles, but the heap is still there. It is not as big as it was two hours ago. Are there enough grains of sand for yet another castle? Yes, of course. It is true that your third castle is bound to be smaller than the other castles, but it does not really matter: even a small castle is better than a hut. And what about a mountain hut? You like mountains, don't you? Do you think you could build a castle on the top of a mountain? No, of course not. So you build a hut instead of a castle. You have now one grain of sand left. It hardly looks like a mountain. So the hut you have built is not a mountain hut. What kind of hut is it? A beach hut, no doubt. You are on a beach after all.

You are conscious of the world because your eyes are open. In a way, your ears are open too. So you enjoy a few symphonies and quartets. You are conscious of all these pieces of music. Suddenly you go deaf. What happens to this music? You remember it and consequently listen to it with your inner ear. You can also look at a number of scores you have in your library. You look at notes and hear a lot of music. Then you go blind: you cannot see any notes. Of course your inner eye sees what it wants, but that is not enough. You wish to see the world with your *outer* eyes. You are conscious of the world and deplore the lack of a *direct* link between you and the beauty of Creation. And then you lose your sense of smell. You think you are in Hell. Wake up and smell the coffee.

They say you have no real feelings. They even call you a 'robot'. But you are not a robot because you have a human skin and even a human heart. They say your heart is made of steel and steel cannot feel anything. And they add, 'Your heart is locked with a padlock and a heavy steel chain.' Of course you reply that your heart is open. They reply that you are close-hearted. And they add, 'You're close-souled. Your soul is also made of steel.' You say to them that nowadays guitar strings are made from steel or nylon. And you add that you hate nylon. You admit that your soul and heart are made of steel. So what?

‘Apart from a few nicks in the varnish, my guitar is in very good condition,’ you add. And you play an old Russian song.

Ah, these goings-on in the brain. They turn right and left; they often come full circle. That is what is called a ‘vicious circle’. All right, you draw a geometric design of overlapping circles and think it is a faithful representation of your brain, of its inner life. To some extent it is, but you should not forget that interior monologues can be cut into circles, squares and triangles. Sometimes you are tempted to cut open your head and see what is going on inside. All right, you cut it open and come across circles, squares, triangles, rectangles, landscapes, animals, heaven and so on. To cut a long story short, you are sure to find almost *everything* inside your brain. Anyway, you will come across your conscious and also your unconscious mind – at least a few bits of it. A few blackouts.

If you damage your body, you feel pain and also a desire to avoid further damage. How can you avoid this? You renounce the use of knives, swords and razors. You have no wish to be found the next day with your throat slit; yet the procedure may not be painful, provided you do it quickly, competently. But you think that death himself is just a painful experience, psychologically speaking. You often ask yourself, ‘How does it feel?’ as you think about death. Your curiosity could kill you: not only kittens die on account of it. ‘How do they die?’ you wonder. A cat seems to be watching you. Yet he is not likely to die unless you kill him. You will not; nor will you slit either your throat or wrists. You have already damaged your body beyond repair so you do your best to avoid death.

The world is probably a logical construction. We construct its story as we try to construct the timescale of events leading back to the Big Bang. We construct a lot of rivers and feel duty bound to construct pontoon bridges across them. Then we discover oil and construct a lot of pipelines to transport it across Siberia to Europe. All this seems logical; it is not. Why walk over rivers? Why own cars and planes? We do not need oil: a few candles are enough. We do not travel; we stay at home in our favourite armchair. Anyway, we are to die. What does it matter *where* we die? At least our candles remind us of churches, of God and salvation. We do not need oil for our salvation. A few prayers are enough.

It is a long way off. What? Everything: there are questions we should not ask. Of course pain, evil and death are always close, but they are far away at the same time; for life is far away, anyway. So is death, oddly enough. We do not understand anything and any experience is false. We eat an apple but it is a false apple; a true apple is far away. It is the forbidden fruit and there are people who say the forbidden fruit is never far away. Where could you find it? The Tree of Knowledge is located in Paradise, nowhere else. And Paradise is far away, even if you sunbathe on a beach every day. Everything is far away, even this beach. Life is beyond the horizon; so is the horizon itself. And we are here, very close; too close perhaps.

I am acquainted with a man who thinks that history is just a dish concocted from all sorts of unlikely ingredients. Many people agree with him. They think that history was created recently – probably two centuries ago. Perhaps I was born yesterday and today I can write in English. But no one believes me so I have to spin yarns about my childhood and write a book about the trials of growing up. Everything was created last night. I slept well so I do not recall anything. There was the Big Bang and the Small Bang. Outside a door was banging in the wind. But I did not hear anything. I slept well, slept sound; I heard no sounds. Why did I wake up? Because I was to be born to write about the Creation of the world. I have written about it. That is enough.

Basking in the sun is not good for one's health, I am told. If a woman or a man likes sunbathing, you might speak to her or him about the risks associated with it. And if she or he does not listen to you, going on with this perilous ritual, you can say, 'I think I've had a bit too much sun today – I've got a headache.' And if your companion says to you around 11 a.m.: 'Shall we go and sit out in the sun?' you may answer, 'The sun's rays are at their most powerful at midday.' I think I have already heard this dialogue many times. Don't I hear everything at the same time: the past, the present and the future? Am I Marcel Proust? Perhaps. I am everybody at the same time. Anyway, it is pleasant to repeat, to quote: everything happens now. Everyone.

Reports are just coming in of a major oil spillage in the North Sea. Reports are just coming in of a major oil spillage in the South Sea. Everywhere there are major oil spillages, which means we have got a lot of oil. This also means we no longer have any oil. It is the end of the world. The world ends with an oil spillage. You spill some oil and the end comes. The world is black and angels are still white, for a while. Then you spill some oil on the angels and they become black too. You spill some oil on daylight, on the sky. They become black. But they are not the endless night that Blake wished to offer us. They are just black. You spill some oil on Blake and he becomes Black; or rather a blackbird in a blackberry pie.

A number of souls. Some of them move with less, others with greater velocity. You pay your money and you take your choice, as they say. But are we permitted to choose in the realm of souls? Suppose you see a soul and are reluctant to join it, notwithstanding the laws of gravity and magnetic fields. But the soul joins you and clings to your body. You repulse the soul and, as you do so, an image makes a personal appearance in your memory, an image, a sentence, 'A few wisps of hay still clung to her skirt.' Everything happens now. You accept the soul. You welcome it and begin a ritual of kisses and caresses. Is that how we become one human being? And what if we continue to repulse the soul, any soul? Is this the way to personal salvation?

In the Paris Metro, at rush hour, you hear the C Major chord. At the beginning of this oratorio you are under the impression you can hear someone crying. Then you realise someone is laughing instead of crying and lamenting his or her lot. You are quite aware of the labyrinth into which you have been sucked: there are other lines, other trains, other fates and other faces. The flames of impersonal love slowly engulf you and suddenly you realise you are at home, sitting in your living room and drinking champagne. You spend the whole day in the Paris metro where trains and escalators take you to other planes which finally merge into one chord, one joy, one feeling of happiness.

What I offer is a description of the state of the world at a given instant and also a series of events at various times, whose relations are not merely spatial but also temporal. I am an observer and a sort of life preserver, as the Americans would say. And I am concerned with events, rather than with bodies. Like Proust I preserve the life of events and consequently they continue to live through times and spaces – sometimes on stilts, as Proust puts it. Yes, they walk on stilts through space and time. There are houses built on stilts to protect them from the annual floods. We are like these houses. What about the annual floods? They are time, space, worries, joys, trials and tribulations. They are daily floods, our daily floods. Sink or swim.

Don Quixote was enamoured of Dulcinea del Toboso. (His psychological armour.) Dante also had his Dulcinea, his homespun Beatrice. And the metamorphosis he wrought upon her – upon the *real* Beatrice – was in many ways similar to how Don Quixote saw and described his Dulcinea. Beatrice was neither plain nor vulgar. And she did not smell of garlic, unlike the snub-nosed farm girl that Sancho endeavours to pass off as Dulcinea in the second part of the novel. Yet Beatrice was by no means beautiful, the *real* Beatrice. She might have walked somewhere, not necessarily in Florence. And talked, devoting herself to her husband and children. But she was what they call ‘manna from heaven’. And Dante conveyed her back to heaven instead of keeping her in Florence. To a nunnery!

Io, daughter of the river-god Inachus, was a priestess of Argive Hear. Zeus fell in love with her and Hera grew jealous, as usual. So Zeus turned Io into a cow, but Hera resolved to chase both the cow and Io all over the world by means of a gadfly. In my youth I was fond of mythologies and cows who were gods in disguise. In this case, however, the cow is Zeus’ mistress. All right, they all speak to us of Oedipus and his complexes. We are supposed to know our ancestors because myths are the same everywhere. To know our soul, we must know our myths; and their myths as well. We know all myths and murder all our fathers; and marry our mothers. Will that allow us to live happily ever after? No decision has been made yet. Let us just wait and see.

People set off on round-the-world cruises, hoping to get rid of the past and even of God, if they believe that *He* is the cause of their suffering. But God and their memories pester them as usual so they do not

achieve their objectives. They have not left the room where they settled at the outset of their lives and the fire is not even dying in the grate. They have no alternative but to live in time only: space is of no use to them. They can put up with the room being untidy, but they hate it if it is not clean. So they spring-clean it all the time and their lives go on as if nothing had happened, all the more so since nothing *has* happened. But now the fire begins to die in the grate. The grate is dying too. Only *they* are immortal, whoever they are.

Do we still have countries, nations and individuals? No longer is one prepared to die for one's country; nor for one's religion. All this does not matter any more. In days of yore we would offer lambs or humans on the altar as a sacrifice for our sins. We do not slaughter lambs any more. We may slaughter thousands of people as a sacrifice for our sins, but we keep away from lambs. We do not even hurt flies. And we do not hurt ourselves: for nothing in the world would we hurt ourselves. Not for our country anyway; nor for our religion. Apparently we can sacrifice something for the sake of our children who are our new religion: we are all new Christians to some extent. We even campaign for the rights of the unborn child. Some people still campaign for the rights of the unborn god – the Messiah.

People continue to gather in the room where I am sitting; yet they do not seem to take notice of my body. They talk, dance and discuss long-term projects, saying, 'We want long-term solutions, not short-term palliatives.' Perhaps it is the objective casual connection of the natural process and so I had better swap it for something unnatural – for *subjective* connections, for instance. But they say these connections have been natural for many, many years, being inaugurated by the advent of quantum mechanics. All right, it might suit me on condition that, as a result of the subjective connections, I find myself in good company. These links and meetings should depend on my personal choice, not on the whims of the universe. But the universe has a whimsical sense of humour.

Not on the road, not on the path. Sitting, walking, living somewhere, here, where and there. An ordinary state of affairs. These affairs are ordinary, so are their states. The endless merry-go-round of disasters, pleasures, carrots and sticks. You enjoy, you enjoy. You cry, you cry. There is a baby at your side. It is your baby but you abandon him and her because you have no money. You put this baby near the front door of a house you see in the neighbourhood. This house must be owned by rich people so you hope your baby will be sent to Harvard, in due course. This course comes, but your baby is not in Harvard: he is in his grave. This grave has been his for many years and he is now used to it. He is used to his short life as well.

Whatever, whatever. Sometimes you just do not care and forget that this care you do not take into consideration is very powerful: it can blind you. Once it blinded Faust and in those days it was called *Sorge*. Was it called 'worry' in English? Once it was called something; now you can *feel* it. You are not

blind yet, but you feel cold. You catch your death of cold all the time. Oddly enough, you have not caught your death yet. Nor have you caught many lives; just one perhaps. One life is enough of course. A half-life would be enough, given your booty or rather what you catch during this life of yours. Can you call all these diseases ‘booty’? You have to call everything, otherwise you will understand neither your life nor its meaning. You call everything names and thus understand the meaning of life.

I do not need any proof of what is going on around me, for no proof whatsoever can obliterate the world I am supposed to influence through my subjectivity. Up to now, my subjectivity has influenced only my own comings and goings; at present my subjectivity keeps me securely under lock and key. What kind of security is this, may I ask? How to guard against ‘the most wonderful pre-established harmony’? How am I to know who will barge into my room in five minutes? Is that what they call ‘non-local connections’? In my dreams that Schopenhauer touches upon I encounter all sorts of people I am loath to see and entertain at home. And often my dreams come true. Last night Dinah’s hand on my shoulder woke me from another bad dream.

Anything goes and you let everything go. This goes, that goes. You do not stop anything, whatever these things or humans are. They go right, you say, ‘All right.’ Actually you do not say anything: you just see them going up and down, here and there. At some point they stop going there; you do not mind. You do not mind anything, even the things that go wrong. There are no rights, no wrongs. Everything is all right. Don’t you just adore lying in a hot bath? Once again you are lying in it and everything goes around you, above you – a few planets, to be exact. Any planet goes, as far as you are concerned. Some planets lead other planets astray. You do not mind: you live on our Earth, on our Mother. What if the Earth is led astray? Your Mother’s death will have a very profound effect on you.

One might think that even the frozen food business is not secure and you are likely to freeze to death if something goes wrong. Your partners’ wish to run it on their own often lies at the root of the problems you encounter when trying to make a big profit. Bound head and foot, you are put in a deep freezer where you breathe your last, forgetting first about space and then about time. Even nirvana escapes you now; yet you have never been nearer to it in your life. And before it, when one is supposed to enjoy this state to the utmost. Anyway, you no longer enjoy anything. Yes, you are a hedonist and agree with Fourier: money is a source of one’s happiness. But there is no money in your deep freezer.

Even yesterday I did not think I would write a page about astrology; yet this page is written and I am still none the wiser. Should I ascend towards heaven and find out more about this science? I know it is useless to travel on Earth: you forget neither your past nor time in general. Your feet are sore with all the walking; your car breaks down and you have to push it off the road. But if you grow a pair of wings, you may learn a lot about astrology, provided you do not get too close to the sun. It is the stars you

should be interested in, judging from the reputation that the signs of the zodiac have acquired in astrology. Why not hit the stars with my stick and look at a puff of dust rising up into the air? Why not let this dust settle in my hair?

You insist on the unity behind appearances. But there is nothing behind these appearances or any other appearances. There are only appearances. You touch them and cannot go any further. You want to go further and further: you are a pioneer, as Whitman put it. Whatever they put into the world does not really matter. What matters is what you experience. You have a set of appearances – right before your eyes. You touch them, kiss them, eat them. That is all you can do. Of course you can dust them: you might like *clean* appearances. They are clean; so are you. ‘Make sure your hands are clean before you have your dinner,’ as your mother used to say. Your hands are clean; so is your food. Today, however, you are allowed to go further: everything is dirty.

When asked ‘What would you remove from a burning house? What would you like to keep forever?’ Cocteau said pedantically, ‘The fire.’ He thought about art and inspiration. What about the rest? They might burn our stupidity, callousness, brutality and greed. Yesterday, on television, I saw a woman who had set fire to her dress. Actually they did not show her death; the presenter just described it in graphic detail. I noticed the tears in his eyes when he talked about her escape from her own room. She rushed to the front door, opened it and the street where she had lived for almost two decades welcomed her for the last time. Why didn’t she stay at home? Isn’t it more convenient to die in front of a mirror where you can follow the progress of the fire destroying your ego?

No point in escaping; no point in travelling round the world. Why ascend to heaven? ‘If a lamp desires to be placed on high,’ says Rumi, ‘it desires that for the sake of others, not for its own sake. What does it matter to a lamp whether it is below or above? It is still a lamp shedding light. But it desires that its light should reach others.’ The same goes for the sun. I am not even a burning match. And I shall put this lamp in the attic: let it shed light on bats. Let it shed light on Thomas Nagel’s famous question: ‘What is it like to be a bat?’ I do not care about bats. Let us put this lamp above our heads. Let it shed light on our *human condition*, as they say. For once, we see ourselves, look at ourselves and say, ‘We should live in an attic amidst the boxes of old clothes.’

Visual cortex, auditory cortex. Can you hear these cortices? Of course you cannot. But do you need to hear them? Are they beautiful? Certainly not. You had better listen to Monteverdi. You listen to his madrigals and forget about your brain. At least I do. The same goes for Gesualdo. Of course he can neither forget nor recall anything, being dead, buried and so on. But I *can* forget my brain and even my mind; apparently they are different. I can also forget my memory; yet it is not different from my mind, my life. But my memory cares neither about my life nor anything else. And I have to live with it. I live

with my memory and it forsakes me all the time. I do not even know if it is still with me, in my bed, in my kitchen. Perhaps it is preparing a hearty stew for dinner.

Now I wake up around five in the morning, which denotes no particular attachment for night on my part: I just realise I am wide awake and incapable of falling asleep, for all my patience. I could stay in bed till Doomsday, waiting for Morpheus or some other god, but I recorded a film last night and am eager to watch it in my television room. I go to this room, to other rooms, and fall asleep in one of them. Such is life – an eternal struggle for sleep. You invite sleep to one room and it comes to another. It is not Morpheus; what overcomes my consciousness is just an ordinary sleep. Nor is it a sweet dream. I mean I have no sweet dreams, whenever I manage to fall asleep. I cannot even say to someone, ‘I had a very odd dream about you last night.’ I do not dream of human beings. Enough is enough.

On television I saw a young man who had been longing to turn into a woman for several years. Even in the Soviet Union this kind of metamorphosis was not illegal. Now it is widespread, affecting up to 30% of youngsters under 20 years of age. The young man showed his breasts to the host who nodded and welcomed another young man who apparently had no wish to become a woman. ‘In our story,’ said the host, ‘the prince woos and wins the fair maiden.’ I did not see the end of the story. I suppose the prince won the fair maiden: TV is magnanimous enough to make you happy unless it is reality TV. Of course you can say to the producers, ‘Please, let me win this fair maiden. I know that we are in the domain of reality. But couldn’t you press another button?’

My house is a total shambles and only the splendid array of my books counteracts the chaos of my domestic life. To escape from this homemade chaos, I take extensive walks and go to restaurants, unwilling to cook anything in my kitchen. How long would Heracles have spent in it? Shall I open all the taps and let the water deal with the dirt? I wish my kitchen was a gigantic dishwasher. No point in trying to escape from anywhere: you continue to burn in the streets, in hospitals and the world is nothing but the Aegean stables, as someone put it. What about the heavens? Why not ask Heracles to cleanse the Milky Way? Is this the way out of the situation? Just walk along the Milky Way until you reach another state of affairs, another pattern of life. Just another pattern.

Should I walk along time? Should I let time walk over my body, my dead or quick body? And what if time just *stands* on my body, stamping its feet to stay warm? Yes, time beats out its rhythm on my stomach. Why can’t it beat it out on the drums, on the piano? As it reads my life out loud, it mangles the rhythm so badly it scarcely makes any sense. So my life makes no sense. It makes nothing at all. Why should it? Everything has been made already, everything and everybody. The last man has been made as well; and the last thing. What is it? A sports car. You get into it and zoom off, hoping to reach the

end in no time at all. Time stands on its roof and continues to stamp its feet. Time cannot stay warm on its own. Actually time is a cold-blooded animal.

All the spheres revolve with constant uniformity. Is that what I call time, whenever in need of more or less plausible definition? The sphere of time moves without acceleration or retardation in spite of our expectations, hopes, memories and regrets. None of the spheres stop because it is a non-stop flight. Time always flies, even when it crawls. Sometimes you get the feeling that time is a baby. Of course it is older than the hills and even than the Big Bang, whatever St Augustine might say on the subject. But whenever it crawls around on its hands and knees, one is likely to confuse it with a baby. Yet it goes on flying, even if we are bored to death; even if we are dead. ‘O time! Stop it!’ says a poet. ‘If you carry on like that, you’ll fall flat on your face in the mud.’ Time always flies through the mud.

Nonchalance is not the only answer to what the French portentously call ‘*la condition humaine*’. This expression is not as precise as it may appear. What condition? Of course a surgeon might say to you, ‘You’ll live on condition that I remove your internal organs. Your cancer cells have already metastasised.’ You may call that ‘*la condition humaine*’, if you wish. But it is better to say ‘out of condition’ or even ‘out of *human* condition’, which means that you have both feet in the grave – along with your internal organs. You can also deal with this situation nonchalantly. You pay no attention to the surgeon and drink whatever you can lay your hands on. This is no human condition either. It is rather an unconditional surrender to death.

I open my eyes and see a bit of the world. The world is a concept. Why not call it ‘a bit’? A bit of what? Of something you have no idea of. But ‘something’ is also a concept. Why not say, ‘I open my eyes and see nothing. Whatever I see has no importance whatever because I’ll die. And if I must die some day, I’m already dead. Nothing matters and that’s why I see nothing.’ It is not true: you see *something*. You see your room or the walls of a hospital where you have already spent two months. It is not nothing; it is probably not a concept either. It is just a bit of the world. But you are allergic to the word ‘world’. You do not wish to live because you will die sooner or later. You see a bit of life; you hear a bit of life. The voice of your nurse, for instance. Listen to this voice; look at that wall.

You cannot go or not go or remain in the state where you neither go nor go. You do not always know whether you are asleep or not. You think you are awake – not *wide-awake*, mind you. You continue to think and your thoughts make up a sort of train, for they follow each other. And if they follow each other, you are not asleep. At least they take notice of the laws of logic. But there is also what they call ‘fuzzy logic’. And this logic may mean you are *half* asleep. There are people who are always half asleep: their logic is fuzzy. So they think and do not think. The same goes for their lives. Do I live? Am I dead? Is the picture always fuzzy on your TV? You are both the picture and TV. You are always like that.

Whatever, whatever. And so on. You add these words to your speeches and ideas, and the world grows infinite. It is not limited to the walls you see around you; to your nurse and meal. Or to the wheels that bring you this meal. 'And so on,' you say. Does that mean you believe in the Hereafter? You may not believe in God, but you do believe in the Hereafter which can exist without God, without any support. For some time the Earth was held up by supports. Not by wooden supports, as some may think. There were three whales and they held up the Earth. They are no longer there. But they may lodge under the Hereafter, holding it up. Suppose there are three whales instead of God. So what? You say 'yes' to the whales, to the Hereafter. And then you say, 'So on. Whatever, whatever.'

All is blind. What does that mean? An army of blind mice? Hardly. There is probably an army and this army fumbles blindly towards another army. The world is completely dark and these soldiers fumble blindly for the door beyond which they are likely to find a number of soldiers. Is *that* the life of our instincts or even thoughts? And what is this proverbial door? Why can't we sit together, drinking tea and eating pastries? Why should our ideas fumble blindly towards this door, another door, another set of ideas? Sometimes they fight from house to house. Doubt, despair, uncertainty, dread of death, death. There are doors. What is behind them? The Great Beyond of course. Or the small beyond. Or no beyond at all except another set of tools.

We should try to avoid mistakes that lurk in the shadows. The truth is always illuminated by God or another truth – a bigger one. Oddly enough, one seldom sees it, for all the intensity of the light. But mistakes are visible in spite of the shadows. One might say we are cats that see perfectly in the dark. So we pick up mistakes and use them in the course of our discussions and also when musing on the possibility of eternal life or rather on immortality. In other words, we resort to these mistakes whenever searching for the elixir of life / youth / immortality. It is little wonder that we never discover this elixir. On the other hand, the truth we do not see might tell us that there is no such thing as the elixir of life. The elixir of death does not exist either. Everything comes naturally, goes away.

Our illusions are proverbial. We continually labour under illusions that are already used to our labours. They are not surprised when we come and start to labour under them. Our labours often remind them of those of Hercules who also laboured under illusions. Who did not labour under illusions? We are born for these labours and there is nothing else we can do under the sun, under the Earth. Life is an illusion; we labour under it and mainly above it. We say, 'The cathedral dominates the landscape for miles around.' We think that too. We are the cathedral and life is just this landscape. We dominate life for millions of miles around. We are happy and even if we know that this happiness is just an illusion, we do not mind. We mind the mind that has an inborn tendency to fight illusions.

Stupidity is not an illusion. Some think it helps us overcome psychological obstacles; and physical obstacles as well. If you are stupid, you think that life is gorgeous. You fall ill, but you think your illness is a gift of God or at least a lesson you have to learn in order to avoid a fatal disease in the future. How can you avoid it? By learning your lesson by heart. You learn all the symptoms of your disease and think you will recognise them if they come back; as if there was only one disease in the world, one set of symptoms. Whenever a doctor examined my mother, she asked him, 'Is it cancer, doctor?' 'There are other diseases in the world,' he would answer. Fear is a disease; so are stupidity and intelligence. But stupidity helps us survive.

If you are told a story in a language you do not know, you do not understand it. Happy ending, unhappy ending. You have no idea what it is all about. But if they ask you what you think about it, you can always say, 'How sad.' What if it is a happy ending you are talking about? Well, they are happy for the moment, but they will not live happily ever after, certainly not. Not 'ever after' anyway. So you say, 'How sad.' If you are unhappy, you do not mind dying because you think that death will end your suffering once and for all. If you are happy, you do not want to die, and you suffer a lot during your agony and even before – all depends on your illness. And this suffering of yours outweighs the happiness you have experienced throughout your life.

You are sad when you are unable to do what you wish to do. It is mostly your own incapacity that makes you sad – not the lack of money. Within your body and mind there are no atoms on which you could count to accomplish your task and fulfil your desire. You are sad and that reduces your powers, your capacities and joy. And your sadness may even obliterate God – at least your faith in Him and *His* powers. Why is He so far away? Why can't He come down and put His hand on your shoulder? From His hand you might receive the energy and atoms you need. Only His hand may shower you with the atoms you need to enjoy your life. Alas, you do not enjoy it. You have a lot of atoms within your substance, but they are hurtful. So you listen to Mozart's *Requiem*.

To finish one life and begin another. There are so many lives on your writing desk you are at loss to understand what all this means. It means nothing. You write about your former and future lives, but they remain where they are; and you have no idea *where* they are. How can you write about something you do not know? You always write about something you do not know. Why dwell on what is known to everyone? If you can see an object, it is better not to describe it. You just leave it where it is. You go around, look at it. You are even allowed to touch it sometimes. But do not describe it, for you are bound to distort it. Leave the world where it is and walk around it from time to time. You may find another life in one of the corners.

Once, in a while. In a while, once. It happens; it does not always vanish into thin air. Perhaps nothing will ever vanish. Your body becomes a worm and a cloud; and a drop of rain, and a set of bones. Your bones become a set of bodies. Is that what you think? Perhaps. No one knows your thoughts. I do not even know my own thoughts: some of them are hidden from me, which does not mean they belong in the kingdom of the unconscious. No repressed thoughts. They are somewhere but I do not *repress* them: they can turn up at any moment. 'Am I coming to the football match?' 'You may love a woman without necessarily wanting to marry her.' 'You may marry a woman without necessarily loving her.' I marry and go to a stadium. I repress everything.

I think I spoke to someone today. Why don't I remember this individual? I might at least remember my own thoughts. Where are they? With this individual? Perhaps. I do not lord it over my thoughts and they are unruly children; they are immature. I wonder if I shall ever have anything mature. Perhaps not. What does it matter? Am I rather immature for my age? It is easy to say you do not remember your age. If they say to you that you are immature for your age, you answer, 'Do you know how old I am? Actually I'm very mature for *my* age.' You can answer like that until your death. 'I'm very young, I'm a child. I'll grow mature with the passing of the years.' There is no easy solution to this problem: either you are young or dim-witted.

Falling in love means to fall round the clock. Let us take Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*. In the middle of Act II, Isolde is not particularly brave: she is literally consumed by passion for Tristan and thinks only in terms of love and lovemaking. And she no longer seems to believe in death. But the Earth itself is, in an extended sense, a falling body so Isolde is on very shaky ground, especially when she sings about Night. At the end of the opera both lovers are in uniform relative motion: they are dead. Tristan was falling faster and faster; eventually his legs gave out and he collapsed on the ground. After watching closely Tristan's spectacular fall, Isolde followed his instructions to the letter. Their tomb is a falling body; it has at every moment an acceleration towards the sun. They are still going round the sun.

You are alone, not alone. You are surrounded by friends. Here are Paul, Jack, Mark and so on. As usual you choose 'so on' and say, 'He is my best friend, my best friend.' You shake hands with this so on – or any other so on – and smile as if you were happy. You are happy because you do not have to shake hands with Paul, Jack and Mark. You do not listen to Beethoven's *Ninth* at the end of which all these people embrace each other. You embrace number nine; you also embrace Beethoven. You embrace number eight and Bruckner. You embrace yourself and count your own selves as if you could count them, their infinite number: one, two, three, four, five. Then you leave yourself alone – with Bruckner, for instance.

Where are you, my old man? You are nowhere, as usual. Everything is as usual and you are nowhere. And then 'as usual' becomes 'as unusual'. So you come to the fore and everyone takes notice of you. Nowhere, as usual, as unusual. Not, not, it is. This is also not. The only word that can express it is 'ot'. Not is too much – it is a downright negation. God needs a nuance, not a sledgehammer argument. Of course God is not magnificent, nor iridescent. He is what is not – just a bottomless pit. 'As unusual' is perhaps a solution to the problem. You can say: 'Not good, not bad, not finite, not infinite' – ad infinitum. But there is an finitum, ad finitum. And in the very middle of this finitum stands an old man.

'This is the abode of all those who –' Thus they speak about a group of people who fly over the rest of mankind or stand like monuments in the sky. Once upon a time they had revelations, illuminations, satories, visits from God, and now they live in the abode of the blessed because they are either meek or not meek. Not all saints are meek. Some of them smile all the time, but that does not mean they are meek. They are not weak either. You had better talk about light, when talking about them. Blessed are the enlightened for they shall inherit the Earth and heaven. They shall also inherit the Caribbean Sea, the Mediterranean Sea. They shall also inherit the past and the future. They have already inherited many abodes where they look at each other and smile.

I see a creature in front of me and perform a number of mental operations to find out what creature I see and not necessarily worship. If, upon seeing a creature, you feel an urge to worship it, you know you are looking at an idol. Automatically you go down on your knees and in this case you do not have to perform *any* mental operation. Instead you go down on your knees and bow; that is what they call a 'gymnastic display'. But if you are not tempted to kneel down in front of whatever you see, you start performing a number of mental operations. You say to yourself, 'Is it an animal?' And you answer, 'No.' 'Is it a man?' 'Yes.' 'Is it a friend?' 'Hardly.' 'Is it an enemy?' 'Perhaps.' 'Is it a woman?' 'No.' 'Is this man armed?' 'Perhaps.' 'Do I wish to die?' 'Perhaps.'

Once upon a time, she said to me in the doorway: 'We're having a small drinks party for one of our colleagues who's leaving next week. Would you care to join us?' I did and therefore I know the answer to the following question: 'Is there anything you've done in your life that you regret?' You went to a party and got drunk. And your girlfriend kissed another man; and yet another, another. She kissed everybody and suddenly disappeared behind a door. And then you heard her moans of ecstasy, but you were already drunk and so do not recall how many moans you heard. How many moans of ecstasy have you heard since you were born? How many moans of agony? You regret all of them anyway. Now you hear only moans of agony, your own moans. You no longer regret anything.

A cry of lamentation did not go up. Everybody kept silent. Everybody remained motionless. Why should we overestimate the human aptitude for compassion? Or for outward manifestations of it? A tyrant

ordered the massacre of 2,000 women and children. And his order was executed. They saw 2,000 corpses mutilated beyond recognition. Why did they keep silent? Of course we are used to massacres; we watch them on TV almost every day. Does that mean we should not cry? Are we paralysed with fear? Silence is the best requiem and we perform this requiem day and night. Even when we cry in our sleep, we keep silent. We no longer throw up our hands in horror. We do not have enough hands for all the horrors of the past. Very few vocal cords.

From time to time I recall what I felt inside Soviet and Russian railway stations. I have a good memory for ugliness and disorder. Holding the mirror up to nature – or down to nature, given the circumstances. Those stations are cluttered with luggage and sleeping bodies. Only immortals can survive in the stench, amid hundreds of snoring and swearing people. No wonder I wish to lose my memory in order to fend off the stench. Well, I seldom go to Russia nowadays. And when I do, I try to avoid railway stations, trains and even trolleybuses where one may occasionally stumble upon a sleeping drunkard. But I shall not be able to avoid Russia – even if I never go there again. I am buried in one of her cemeteries. A run-down cemetery, full of tumbled gravestones.

‘I invited her to Venice and at long last heard her voice near the Doges’ Palace. In the early eighties I grew so homesick – so sick in every sense of the word – that only Moscow and St Petersburg witnessed now our outdated, faded romance. Actually I went to St Petersburg most reluctantly, preferring to stay in Moscow hotels: my flat and dacha had been confiscated. “We’ll never go to the North of Russia,” I said once. And I pointed to the pillow. “Here’s the North, and here’s the East, and here’s the South, and here’s the West. Love is the North and the East and the South.” “And the West?” she asked. “The West is Death. The twilight of the gods, the twilight of humans.”’ From a Russian diary.

‘I love my husband. I did not marry him for the sake of his money. I respect him deeply and truly. But I find him a little boring and monotonous. It is not his fault. He is just not my type. It is *my* fault, rather. He is an industrialist. Not that I have anything against businessmen. I love my husband, but he bores me to death. And he cannot even spend his money *artistically*. He just buys expensive cars and jewels. I have nothing against jewels, but there are other pleasures in life, aren’t there? Music, poetry. Life is full of poetry, and he simply overlooks it. He leaves poetry to poets. He cannot even drink a glass of wine. Poetically, artistically, spiritually. He just drinks it and wipes his lips with a napkin. Such a man deserves to be killed.’ From the diary of a woman.

‘My patient is clearly trapped in a kind of imaginary muddle. He attributes potency – the phallus – to another man, to the husband of his former mistress. And yet this does not stop his mistress from desiring one, which shows that the phallus is a signifier, separate here from any question of having or not having a penis. To have or have not. The phallus represents what humans lose in entering the world of language.

What they want will always be out of reach because of their attachment to words. They love the word “happiness”. I say to them that happiness is within their reach, but they continue to look for the *meaning* of this word. What is it? Money? But money doesn’t grow on trees. So they never even look at trees. And looking at trees makes you happy.’ From the diary of a psychoanalyst.

‘Have you received my letter? Why haven’t you answered it? You’re not alone. I feel there’s another woman in your love, many women. You’re a notorious womaniser. You can’t be faithful to your only wife. Do you still love me? You can sleep with those women, if you wish, on condition that you don’t fall in love with them. But you shouldn’t touch them too often. Do you touch their lips? Do those women ever ask you to rub suntan lotion over their bodies? Do you drink love potions with them? Or pink champagne? What do you talk to them about? About me? Are you laughing at me? Am I your laughing stock? I have to warn you that there’s a degree of danger involved in this. I’m holding a box of sleeping pills.’ From the letter of a forsaken wife.

You meet somebody, a stranger. You look at each other and something takes shape. ‘One can distinguish a slim shape in a short white dress,’ as Wilkie Collins put it. The shape of a feeling. And occasionally feelings can wear dresses, white or black dresses – if they happen to be mixed with memories and forebodings. You see a woman and this woman reminds you of your mother, your childhood, of a novel you read in your youth. A woman in white. She incarnates your feeling of love. Then you realise you are looking at a fatal woman. You have a strange foreboding that something will go wrong. A woman in black. This woman attends your funeral and drops a clod of earth into your grave. Her black shoes.

My only aim in writing these poems is the destruction of silence. Setting fire to it. I wonder how it would burn. Silently, or with a crackle? Apparently the threat of fossil fuels running out sometime in the next millennium looks ever greater. I do not care about fossil fuels: man can do without them. The ancient Greeks lived without oil and coal. Something is running out in our brains. We are shrinking. Humans should be dry-cleaned. Strange, isn’t it? I could bear silence a few years ago. I even enjoyed it. I enjoyed talking to myself. I used to laugh at my own jokes. Now I do not laugh any more. Nor do I cry. My belongings are scattered in various heaps around the room. I am one of these heaps. Yet I no longer belong to myself. Could I please join your Lonely Hearts Club?

Unless you choose to settle on the moon. Otherwise you will always complain. You will complain because you are a prophet. Why have I been chosen? I should have gone to the moon last year. Of course God would have found me there and brought me back to Earth. I prophesy many wars. I prophesy another crop failure which is sure to result in widespread famine. Why do I have to prophesy these disasters? I do not say, ‘Why have You forsaken me?’ I say, ‘Why have You *chosen* me?’ And I add, ‘Could You please forsake me once and for all? I can’t speak properly and I have no wish to be stoned

to death. No one likes prophets. Have You heard me?’ Heavy and prolonged rain will spell disaster for many plants. Let us pray for the victims of this terrible disaster.

Apparently human sin causes the heavenly bodies to depart from their courses. Why are they influenced by our sin? After all, they are *heavenly* bodies and heaven is far superior to the Earth, for heavenly hosts do not live down here. Of course it is true that human sin introduces a sort of dissonance into the music of the spheres that is otherwise as beautiful as Mozart’s scores. Human sin pushes them around, up and down, back and forward, and one hears a piece of twelve-tone music. Of course it is a piece by Schoenberg, but one prefers Mozart to both Schoenberg and Webern. Humans swear to God that they will not sin either tonight or tomorrow. And God allows them to listen to *Don Giovanni*, *Zauberflöte* and *Così fan tutte*. But at the end of the week they will listen to Webern’s cantatas.

Can you hear me, heavenly bodies? What are you doing? You are supposed to move in circles. Why? Out of your love of God. Why all these ellipses? Are you crazy? You should once and for all repudiate your elliptical orbits. I am talking to you, Mars. Stop revolving in an elliptical orbit. If you do not stop at once, you will be excommunicated. Kepler is already in Hell. Circles are much more beautiful and harmonious than ellipses. They are worthier of God’s love. Our God is spherical and so He does not tolerate ellipses, or rectangles. You do not know what you are doing. You may fall on our heads, one of these days. You will extend your ellipses and fall on our heads. Shame on you for being so unkind, so atheistic. You will be banished to another universe!

Miracles do not happen. And it is a miracle that they do not happen: life is miraculously beautiful and everything looks like a miracle whenever we enter our life. So one might say that miracles happen every day – nay, every second. Every second is a miracle; so is time itself. Why does it move at all? It could have fallen asleep many centuries ago. No, it goes on in spite of everything. It is a miracle of course; so is every word we utter. Every sound is a miracle and a gift of God. A dog is barking. How beautiful this sound is, especially when it resounds in the dead of night. This sound is not dead – just another miracle. Nor is the dog, incidentally. Of course you can shoot it down, if it prevents you from sleeping and enjoying a dozen sweet dreams. You do not shoot – another miracle.

There are two varieties of truth: the noble one and the ignoble one. Actually ignoble truths are much more numerous so you traditionally say, ‘The ignoble seven,’ ‘the ignoble hundred,’ whilst the noble truth remains alone, on its own. What does it do in the course of this life of solitude? It makes a number of noble gestures. And of course it often fights for a noble cause. And last but not least, it always tells the truth – the only truth you can find in the universe. One day the noble truth picked it up and showed it to us; we did not recognise it. The one and only truth is our Messiah, but we think it stretches the truth

whenever it speaks of its own truthfulness. After a while, we say to it, 'Truth is stranger than fiction and we prefer fiction.' And we avail ourselves of ignoble truths or lies.

Our conclusions must follow from our premises. We have no idea if these premises are really ours. They come to us and we think they are axioms. We have been coming across them for many years. That does not mean we shall come across them tomorrow, let alone the day after. But we already have our conclusions and we are reluctant to part with them. How could we live without conclusions? Yesterday we talked late into the night, but nothing was concluded. Today we talked in the afternoon and came to the conclusion that we had been right the night before: no conclusion can be reached, however much we strive for such an outcome. So last night offers us a few premises. Now we turn these premises to good account and conclude that no conclusion will ever help us to hold out.

Are human beings essentially wicked? If they *spontaneously* torture children, the answer is 'yes'. If they torture them but do it *unspontaneously*, the answer is 'yes-no'. If they do not torture anyone, not even their torturers, the answer is 'not at all'. So they are essentially good. Mystics say that the world is God's signature or handwriting. Whenever we look at a beautiful garden, we say that this garden is a symbol of God's goodness. But is there any scientific evidence that a person's character is reflected in their handwriting? You may have beautiful handwriting and an ugly personality. You are fond of calligraphy, which does not prevent you from torturing dogs. Of course this has no bearing on God's acts and intents: He has never tortured dogs, children and other humans.

You begin by talking nonsense in the hope that, sooner or later, an intelligent idea comes out of your mouth. What counts is your participation in the talk of the world so you talk business and politics and demonstrate that your ignorance knows no bounds. As you talk, you wave your hands around a lot in the hope that they will do something useful today or tomorrow. For instance, you can hit your enemy in the hope that he turns his other cheek. You go on slapping his face until Doomsday or his or her unconditional surrender. And then you give utterance to a sensible idea such as, 'This result is a triumphant victory for democracy,' or 'You must eat to keep your strength up,' or 'I must get some sleep – I'm exhausted.'

The problem of distracted driving can be resolved by the road you have taken. If it is a motorway, you may get distracted by a piece of music you are listening to, or by your friends who always talk to you about their journeys into fear or joy. You listen to them and do not realise you have already embarked on your journey into death. Well, you listen neither to your friends nor to Beethoven's trios and once again you arrive at one of the points situated in the kingdom of life. If you are on a Russian road, you have to focus your attention on this road, otherwise you may fall into one of the holes that punctuate it.

You wish you could admire the landscapes you are driving through: the Russian countryside is very beautiful. You are looking at the road. You are the king of the road.

We answer questions and soon run into trouble. So we no longer answer questions and give a multitude of answers that do not answer anything or anybody. They are just answers, nothing else. No one asks you about life or predicate calculus. You say, 'I've no idea what predicate calculus and life mean. I'm just happy.' You say so to yourself. You do not ask yourself if you are *really* happy, if it is *real* happiness you seem to be experiencing tonight. Well, it is certainly *unreal* happiness, but you do not question your feeling of well-being. You read in a newspaper that people doing yoga benefit from an increased feeling of well-being, and you say to yourself that you have been doing yoga for the last 20 years. 'Well-being, fine, I.' You repeat these words and listen to their numerous echoes. Well, well.

Another half an hour of virtue. Patience is a virtue – everyone is aware of that. You become patient as you wait for a bathing beauty who must come in half an hour. You *pretend* you are waiting for her. Logically enough, she does not come. You are on the verge of suicide. You devote five minutes to a search for sleeping pills or a revolver. Five unvirtuous minutes. Then you recall that you are not the master of your own life: you do not *own* it. This recollection lasts for three minutes. You call them 'three minutes of virtue'. Then you do a bit of charity work and this lasts for two days. In the course of these days you behave rather cruelly. You insult and strike your neighbour; you set fire to the house of your colleague. But the charity work you are doing makes you feel virtuous.

By way of conclusion, you talk for hours, trying to solve an unsolvable problem. At some point you say to yourself that no problem will ever be solved because all problems are unsolvable. This does not get you anywhere. So you do your best to conclude your speech. You say there are only foregone conclusions. 'The second law of thermodynamics lies at the root of these conclusions,' you add with a frown. Anyway, what counts is the way, not its conclusion. We shall go on, whatever happens. And if nothing happens, we shall go on. Pioneers, pioneers. Let us go west, cutting down forests and planting new crops. Let us go east and south. Let us rule the waves and old hills. Let us go as long as the going is good. We are mighty and shall not fall. Let us defy the law of gravity.

Origen says that the sun sins. We think that the sun sings: it bursts into song as soon as it appears above the horizon. No way, as they say. The sun sins even at night as it floats under the Earth. It is easier to sin underground than in the sky where one rubs shoulders with angels and Christian martyrs. How can you sin in their presence? What inspires you? What tempts you? You cannot think the sun has a sick and perverted mind, especially if the weather is fine. Someone or something must lead it astray – under the Earth where serpents give full rein to their impulses. Some say the sun is at the root of original sin:

it showed Satan to Eve. But for its rays, the primordial couple would not have found the forbidden fruit. Once upon a time, a ray of sunshine shone through a gap in the clouds.

Recording the scene of every crime, a new body camera is already on the market. It captures a wide-angle view that is close to what a police officer sees while on patrol. Usually police officers see nothing or next to nothing but this does not matter. Anyway, you are not a police officer. You are just a voyeur. You go for a walk and see a middle-aged man harassing a beautiful young woman. She does not shout, 'Stop harassing me!' She screams because it is an extreme case of sexual harassment. You get closer and closer to the two bodies and your body camera starts working. After all, it is on duty. A close-up of one body; a close-up of the other body. A stunning close-up of both bodies. Once the scene is over, you go to the police and show your porn movie to the officer on duty.

My heart has no definitive shape. It can be moulded into almost any shape. What does its shape depend upon? If I see a beautiful garden, my heart assumes the shape of this garden. The same goes for beautiful women: every time I see one, my heart becomes a beautiful woman. One might say I have many hearts and they are all different shapes. Every object is in a class of its own; the same goes for subjects. They are all classy, so to speak. My heart can also assume the shape of an idea, of a sentiment. If immortality is on the agenda, my heart grows immortal. Or eternal. If I read a haiku, my heart splits into 17 syllables. If I fall in love, my heart becomes the Heart.

Three weeks ago you gave a party. The guests all arrived bearing gifts. You and your husband were delighted with them. The guests departed. You did not sleep that night. You were thinking about how you could ever repay your guests for their kindness. You are tackling the same problem tonight. There is another sleepless night in store for you. But since your birthday you have got used to sleepless nights. What presents could you give to all your friends? Their presents are expensive; you have no money. The most important rule in life is always to repay your colleagues and friends for their generosity. You hate them for imposing this rule on you. How dare they? They must hate you, all of them. You invite them to another party, thereby turning the other cheek.

We have no idea what is morally acceptable and what is not. A woman is stoned to death; in another society and country she would be put on a pedestal and worshipped like a movie star. There are many attitudes to morality, religion and politics in our world. That is why we say, 'After years of state control, the country is now moving towards political/religious/cultural pluralism.' We do not seem to notice *God's* control and the angels who constantly hover in the sky, waiting to swoop down on their preys. There are no more guardian angels; there are only policemen and soldiers. They have wings and Kalashnikovs. There is a pluralism of control and this pluralism is a permanent feature of human life, its only condition. Kalashnikovs are here and there; so are machine guns and atom bombs.

You grow out of your clothes and even out of yourself. You grow bigger and bigger, smarter and smarter. There is an individual in front of you: small, stupid, insignificant. You are intelligent, bright, mature. You are very mature for your age – for *any* age. You wonder how you could be so immature only 20 years ago. How could you believe in your own future? And in that of the world? The future you were dreaming about is also in front of you. Your immature self stands beside this future. You compare them and cry for a while. What are your hopes and dreams for the future? What future? If you obliterate these hopes and dreams, and also your memories, there will be no future. And no past. You will sit in your armchair and cry in the eternal present.

Your new thought means that the vast majority of your other thoughts will lose out. In spite of your age, you still enjoy thinking and coming up with new ideas. Every new thought destroys a number of thoughts and reigns alone in your head until further notice. What does all this mean in the context of life? This means that you are physically/mentally active. You say to yourself, ‘You’ve got to try to keep active as you grow older,’ and you keep active. You water your flowers and drink your tea. You might miss out on tea: your survival does not depend on it. You can persevere in your being without cups and teapots. But you continue to drink your tea and water your flowers. You think that your life is just a flower so you have to water it. You water it with tea and milk.

The attainment of the great fearlessness. Your fears are great and only great fearlessness can counterbalance them. For the moment you have only a *small* dose of fearlessness at your disposal: you are no longer afraid of the dark. You see in the dark and even leap in the dark. And your fearlessness grows with every leap, every darkness, every adventure. But that is not enough: you still fear death. You know that death is just another darkness – more or less akin to the one you are dealing with today. It is also a kind of deep sleep. What kind? What sleep? You wish you could die in your sleep. But you also wish you could wake from this sleep of yours. Your fearlessness continues to grow. Is it already great? Not quite, not yet. You measure it twice week.

According to Origen, even demons will be saved. How? Will Jesus remove the forces of evil from their souls? Is there more room for sins in His substance? What do I care about demons and their salvation! I sin every minute and everywhere. I love going on long journeys. Whenever I come back, I am confronted with an enormous heap of sins lying on the doormat. Of course I was sinning constantly in the course of my journey. But how could I sin at home? At the same time? In point of fact there was no one at home. If I had children, one might say, ‘In your absence, your children behaved violently. They hadn’t been brought up to respect authority.’ My walls, just my walls. Bad influence.

I am not on the same wavelength as 'I'. This other 'I' of mine is not my double. It is another 'I', another thing. I wish this landscape could be mine – instead of this 'I' that is a nonentity, a void. You put yourself into this void and become another 'I'. I put myself into this void and nothing happens, and happens, and happens. A word happens, a sixpence, a pocket full of rye. Full of May, full of May. A pocket full of summertime, of happiness. Fill your head with fun and your pocket with happiness. There are only happenings around. They happen all the time and you cannot get rid of them, forget them. Forget all happenings and happen inside a piece of peace. There is nothing else – only peace of mind, peace of body, peace of *modus operandi*. Peace of *Parsifal*.

Nothing comes of its own: you have to call, shout, ring up, send emails. Nothing comes and nobody is there. What to do with this nobody? No shapes, only suffering. And suffering has no shapes. Every suffering is shapeless. If it had a shape you could erase it and draw something else in the same body. It is shapeless; it does not look like your body. Your suffering is anonymous; one might say the whole humanity suffers from the same disease and death. One should not talk; one always says too much. One speaks of the universe and your body; about dying breaths and lying breaths. And your body speaks of itself, of its nerves and sinews. Your body asks your soul's forgiveness. It does not say, 'Forgive me.' It says, 'You are my soul.'

Tiny movements. They get you nowhere; nor do they lead anywhere. Why do you indulge in them? There is a slight tremor in your voice. All right, we accept your voice that conveys a piece of news. But we do not need this tremor: it is *outside* the news you are talking about. We need only facts, not your emotions. Perhaps you wish us to pity you. You might suggest you are unhappy and the news you are talking about does not count at all. What counts is your state of mind and heart, your angst and other unpleasant things. For the moment it is a thing in itself we encounter when listening to your voice. This tremor is *in itself*. Let it remain where it is: we are snowed under with work and have no time for your tremors and tremolos. Actually there is a *big* tremor in *our* voice. Listen, o listen.

You drop plans, a lot of plans. At first you set out your plans for the coming year. You put them side by side and sit for a while before an array of plans, intentions, ideas, pleasures, loves. And friendships, and restaurants. You explain your plans in a few brief sentences. To whom? To anybody – to yourself, for instance. If you do not talk about your plans, they do not exist. Only words give births to worlds. As you explain your plans they begin to drop like flies or wasps. Why? As you talk you realise the uselessness of your undertakings. You say to yourself, 'Use.' Then you cancel this 'use' by 'less'. And 'ness' signs your own death warrant. Uselessness. Nothing will ever work, given the number of bugs and deaths you swallow every minute. You look at your plans that continue to drop.

Your left hand is not supposed to know what your right hand does. Your left hand is predestination; your right hand is tangible proof of the existence of free will. Perhaps your right hand also proves the existence of God. You can never tell. Only time will tell whether God exists or not. If He does exist, His son or daughter will come to us as the last Messiah and this time everyone will recognise them. Everyone will exclaim, 'Here's our God.' And everyone will raise their right hand. And what about the left hand? You can cut it off, if you wish: you no longer need either predestination or determinism. You are free – not only because you live in a free country. You are free because you are a man, a woman or a child. Your right hand gives a salute and the Messiah returns it.

Last time. You say it over and over again. 'I'll never...I'll never...Never again...Pity, pity...' You pity yourself and nothing comes of it: someone else should pity you, otherwise it does not work. So you recite your interior monologue in your wife's presence. She pities you for a while but reminds you that you are hungry. It is not the last time you are hungry and you are aware of this fact. So for once you do not say, 'I'll never...I'll never.' You say instead, 'Let the fish cook for half an hour before you add the wine.' Your wife follows your instructions to the letter. As you eat you think about the Last Supper and say to your wife, 'Pity, pity.' Again she pities you for a while. But you face your future bravely and without any hint of self-pity. Anyway, you know it is your last future.

Your intuition must be consistent with whatever your reason tells you about the world. If you have to base your judgment only on intuition, you may find yourself in dire straits. So your reason should say to your intuition if it is right or not. If it disagrees with your intuition, you should opt for your reason's judgment. The whole matter is somewhat akin to the relationship between reason and faith. Even now some of us say that God needs only our intuition and none of the Kant-repudiated proofs of His life. Most people have an intuitive sense of right and wrong. And it is right to believe in God, for if you do not believe in Him, you are wrong and go to Hell. But even if He does *not* exist, you will not go to Hell, for you *believe* in Him. So your intuition tells you that God is alive and well.

I do not know if I am really old or not. They say you are as old as your senses, as your representation of life and yourself. If you feel you are old, you are old. But if you run every day and are convinced you can break many records, you are young. You can break a record on the verge of death. These records and jogging expeditions do not mean anything. And even if you feel young, you may be extremely old inside your senses and outside them. Some individuals always complain and live forever; others speak about their eternal youth and the fountains where they find their youth. And they commit suicide. I feel I am younger than I was 40 years ago. In my youth I suffered from rheumatism. Today, I no longer suffer from it. I am as young as the youngest tree in my garden.

How to get out of a question? You can answer it, but this manoeuvre does not solve the problem. The question haunts you because it is an *eternal* question. There are temporary questions such as, 'How are you today?' 'I'm fine,' you say. Next day you may be asked the same question. And you may answer, 'I'm fine,' even if you are not fine. Actually it is a different question, given that time goes on and one day comes after another. Today you are fine *differently* as if you were another man. You are another man or woman. Perhaps you feel like a woman today, although you are actually a man. But there are eternal questions that do not depend on how you feel and who you are. Are you dead? Have you ever lived? These are eternal questions.

Whenever I go to my bathroom, I recall my uncle who, five decades ago, slipped in the bath and broke his hip. You can break anything, anywhere. Sometimes I get the feeling that the world is so fragile we cannot raise a finger without breaking something. And breaking ourselves. You raise your finger and it falls to the floor. You pick it up and break your leg. You pick your leg up and break your spine. During this ritual you break three vases and your camcorder. The world is fragile; so is your soul. Whenever you break your legs and hips, your soul cracks from side to side. At least mine does, judging from what I feel inside my pineal gland. And my soul is part of the universal soul. So the world cracks from side to side whenever I raise my finger.

These mental exercises are designed to encourage creative thinking. That is what I am told. What could I create? Pleasures, pleasures. I no longer count on others in this domain. I should be able to find pleasures inside myself. My body may let me down, but the void I feel inside it is already endowed with creative thinking – as a result of mental exercises. What pleasure did this void of mine create this morning? The pleasure of realising that the weather is fine. I do not always realise it. Sometimes I spend 40 hours in my bed, taking no notice of what goes on beyond my windows. Doing and seeing nothing is another pleasure I create on a whim. Not caring about the sun is the greatest pleasure one can experience. Not caring, staying in bed.

You are generous to a fault. What you need you give to others, but others do not take advantage of your presents. And you are starving to death as a result of your generosity. You come across many results and cannot help wondering why all this happens. Where are the causes of this mess, of this mass of nonsense? There are no causes to speak of; even the Prime Mover is not the cause of life and its incertitude. Perhaps Incertitude is both the cause of life and that of its disorders. Life means disorder, not order. You throw molecules into it and now they are thrown into life. Once inside this life of ours and theirs, they run pell-mell for the doors, determined to get out. They are right of course: one *should* run for the doors. But there are no doors. Even death is not a door. Just another trap.

You are inside a layer. It is better to be inside than outside. Outdoors – and outlayers – you might get caught in torrential rain. In the outside world there are neither raincoats nor umbrellas. Inside your layer there are only raincoats, umbrellas and boots. You wish you could enjoy a hot bath but there are no baths inside this layer of yours. You know you live in a many-layered region. You often compare it to a sort of pie. You embark upon a journey to another layer. You are wearing two raincoats; there are three umbrellas in your sports bag. No rain, no sun. Your raincoats protect you against the cold too. No cold, no heat. Never mind – you are protected. Anything can happen in the course of your journey. You may be gradually destroyed by rust.

You meditate on dust. Is it a Christian meditation? For the moment you are not concerned with Christianity or Buddhism. You just look at the dust that covers your furniture and the rest of your house. You have no wish to dust your furniture, for the dust you see around you helps you meditate on life and death. There are no ashes in your fireplace, but this does not really matter: the dust you are surrounded with provides support to your meditation. You are surrounded by dust – on all sides, and every night. Nothing prevents you from drawing the logical conclusion that you are this dust or any other dust. What kind of dust are you? It does not matter either. You are human dust and nothing, no one will ever dust you.

You smoke a cigarette and look at the ash you drop in an ashtray. Whenever you smoke, you do not look around you, even if you are in Venice, in Florence. You look at the ash you drop in a number of ashtrays. You are not the ashes you contemplate as you sit on a terrace, not far from the sea, not far from some river or other. You are probably this river or even the sea, given the amplitude of your longings, the scope of your knowledge, of your achievements. Why look at the ashes, your own ashes? Whatever you look at is yourself. It is just a variety of pantheism. Let us call it panhumanism. Whatever you listen to is also yourself. A Brahms quartet, for instance. You are also the cigarette you are holding. You are burning. You have lived through many world conflagrations.

One, two, three. Whenever you count anything, you count yourself. Not necessarily the days you have lived through since your birthday. You do not count seconds either. Yet you count yourself, your breath, your heart. Not necessarily your heartbeats: you are not a doctor after all. You count your will or rather your wills: your will to power, your will to live, your will to die, your will to love, your will to forget. In your heart of hearts there are several wills to forget, but you seldom use them. Most of the time you wish to *remember* this and that. Your self is swarming with your wills to remember. You remember a wasp. This wasp comes towards you and you start flailing your arms around. A woman comes, a child. You recognise yourself. You kiss yourself.

No dawn is different from any twilight, whatever their colours. One wakes up, one falls asleep. Another day, another night. Is there any difference between night and day? These words are different; even one's feelings may be different, for they depend on what one goes through. One goes through the twilight. One stops in the middle of it. What are one's feelings and sentiments? One is filled to the brim with twilight feelings. But one's sentiments are dawn-oriented. This does not mean that death is always mixed with resurrection. Sometimes it is, sometimes it is not. This time it is not so one does not rise from the dead. One remains in the middle of the dead and vice versa. The darkest hour is just before dawn; or after it.

Is that for nothing? Once again – for nothing, nothing. You have forgiven everyone. Even in your childhood they insulted and beat you. You forgave them a long time ago. It is high time you forgave the others and even the universe that still ill-treats you. You forgive a steak: it is too tough. You forgive your wristwatch that lets you down every other hour. You forgive and bless everything as if there was nothing you could curse once and for all. Your curses remain inside you; perhaps in your unconscious. Your unconscious is very powerful, but it does not let your curses out. It continues to curse your friends and enemies; you know nothing about these curses. So you continue to forgive and bless everyone. You bless a child who says, 'You're old, an old fool.'

You listen to secrets. They are no longer secrets because many secrets cannot keep secrets. Everything is out and you look at everything: truths, lies, humans, inhumans, unhumans. In and un. The point at which the solid and the liquid are in equilibrium is called the freezing point. You are always at this point. You are freezing to death, but you are not dead. You are freezing eternally. In and un and an. You are solid and liquid; you are plus and minus. 'And let me tell you,' they say. And they say nothing else. Their words are also freezing – to death and life. And what do I have to experience now? The now of course. And the course. Leave me alone. I can experience the leave, but not the alone, not alone. Go it alone. Back alone. My cherry tree is ending to blossom.

You cannot experience words. You come across them and they say something to you. Every word has one meaning, several meanings. You pick these meanings up and look for the one you need. But all of a sudden another meaning crops up and imposes a ban on other meanings. It is very ambitious but you doubt it will ever make it to the top. Why? Because it is ambitious *for you*, not only for itself. In a way, it is the meaning of your life. And try as you may, you cannot persuade it that life has no meaning – neither your life nor life in general. You know it is a cliché, but life is a cliché. You know that too. And that is also a cliché. You are surrounded by clichés. Which one to choose? But you are not a chooser; nor are you a beggar. You trot out some old cliché and life goes on.

You are fatally ill. A trouble shared is a trouble halved. So you share your illness with your wife: you contaminate her. She gives her consent and you exhale your microbes, bugs and viruses. Now you are both fatally ill. Is your own trouble halved? And what about your wife? Where are the halves they speak about? There are only unities. They unite, multiply and your respective deaths are getting worse and worse. Is there such a thing as a half-death? What does that mean? Are you always half-alive? Waiting for resurrection? Your virtual resurrection ensures safety in the kingdom of death. You are always alive – to some extent. One third, one fourth. Even one tenth of life counts, provided you believe in this tenth. Do not share it with anybody.

This theory is dry and obscure. What theory? Any theory is dry and obscure because it is more or less abstract, even if it is based on facts, on real life. Let us take Darwin's theory of evolution. It is obscure because we cannot see our ancestors. Of course we can go to a zoo and look at apes for hours and hours. But the link between them and us is obscure; it is also dry and dreadful. Did we ever look like that? We did, according to Darwin. But it is just a theory, nothing else. Didn't God put us on the highest rung of the ladder? He did, of course He did. And He created us out of nothing – out of everything, rather. Out of beauty, out of happiness, out of cornucopia. Why should we jump from one tree to another? Why should we spend our lives behind bars?

You must be born at the right moment, otherwise your life will be unbearable. It is better not to be born than to see the light of day at the wrong moment. You are born; you see the light of day. But you do not see the moment of your birth so you cannot say if it is the wrong moment or the right one. Of course astrologists can say a lot on the subject. It is too late anyway: you can no longer go back to your mother's womb, to the void from which you came many years ago. No use speaking to astrologers. So you do not speak to them. You do not speak to anybody. You sit in your corner and look at other corners. Some of them are right, others wrong. Tonight, you are singing a little song to yourself. This song is right; so is this hour.

You go through a forest of symbols or nuances. Forests are waiting for you. They are full of sounds and mouths. And these mouths are prepared to devour you, if necessary. Perhaps it is not necessary, not for the moment. They speak of signs so these forests are also full of signs, and of minds. And these minds have always been studying you. Do they know you? Hardly. 'Hardly' is your only defence. They say, 'You're ill with meningitis.' You answer, 'Hardly.' So you are not ill with meningitis. You are ill with anguritis. What is anguritis? You do not know. But you feel you are ill. You go through a forest of illnesses, ups and downs. You go through a number of ups and fly off. You fly much higher than most aeroplanes. Then you just say your prayer and hope.

What is, what is. Pick this object up and put it down somewhere else. Else is better than here or there. And somewhere is better than else. The somewhere is good for you; so is the else. I do not seem to understand. Understanding comes; it does not seem to understand either. Do not, do not. That is another prayer, a negative one. Please do not. Not even a touch. Do not, do not. All this is painful; and wonderful. A story is being told about you and your offspring. You will have three sons and two daughters. And they will give birth, wage wars. On other countries, on themselves. You wage war on your body, your psyche. No blue sky, not for the moment. You choose red sky, *niet* sky. No sky, no anything. Is that what. Is that not. A pocket full of; so is the soul.

Can God know Himself? God is inaccessible; and He is much more inaccessible than Joyce or Schoenberg. You can feel something as you listen to Schoenberg's works. You do not feel anything during your encounters with God because, in this case, you know neither your feelings nor His Majesty. If you do not manage to identify your feelings, you speak to an angel. If you do not feel your feelings, you are in touch with God. You lose everything when you are in His presence. You do not understand anything; you do not know knowledge as such. You are lost and no GPS will ever put you on the right track. No right tracks, no wrong tracks. No tracks at all. That is God. How could God know God if no track will ever lead Him to Himself?

Another Pope, another Emperor. The Pope versus the Emperor and vice versa. That is how they lived in the Middle Ages. One lives in a middle age, in a right-hand one. An emperor turns up; another individual appears on the stage. You are on the stage too, for Shakespeare said something to this effect. We are in a theatre – not only in boxes, in the dress circle. We are inside vicious circles and also outside them. There is an emperor outdoors; there is a pope indoors. And vice versa. The world is the vice versa. And everything else. There are no worlds except the world. There are no worlds without theatricals and theatres. Some popes used to beat emperors with sticks. And vice versa. Some popes were beaten senseless: they no longer had any senses. Emperors had no senses at all.

When you are told to see into the meaning of, you look into the meaning of and find the meaning of, if you are allowed to do so either by the Buddha or gurus. You are allowed to do so, so you see the meaning and realise you are nothing. You also realise that nothing is you. You *realise* and that is what counts. If you realise *this*, you will also realise *that* – sooner or later. The chief thing is to *realise* and the rest will come in due course. But first is the due course that should come in due course. It does not come: you have also realised that. As far as you know. You see into the meaning *of* and find all that. You are weary of ofs and so ons. But life goes on; it is not weary of anything. So it goes on and of. It drops from time to time; so does time.

You see many birds. How many can you shoot down with one arrow? None, for you do not know how to shoot. And if you do, you can shoot only one bird; with one arrow. You shoot this bird with your arrow and it falls. You look at it and pick it up. What can you do with this bird? You are a vegetarian so you cannot eat it. You can hang it on one of your walls. What for? You do not like the look of this bird; nor do you like the look of the hotel where you are staying. You do not like the look of anything. So you continue to shoot. You shoot arrows at a target; you shoot them at no-target. It is better to shoot them at no-target, for your guru says that 'no' is better than 'yes'. So you shoot arrows at yeses. There are hundreds of them. How many arrows do you have? Three.

Someone said. Those said too. Not to be outdone, two said two. What you see is not a word, not a pipe. It is a tree. Neither the Tree Knowledge nor the Tree of Life. Not even a birch tree of the kind you see on Russian postcards. Another tree. Its branches grow towards what is low; its roots are on high and a number of rays descend upon them. Nonsense. No rays, no suns, no moons, no gods, no goods. Just a tree and a postcard. A tree and an animal. And the caption says you are welcome to the country where you can find hotels, swimming pools and sausages. You find sausages and eat them. And you stay in the hotels three nights. You know that three is symbolic; whenever you go somewhere, you spend three roubles and stay three nights. And if the Holy Spirit is not available, you stay two nights.

An underground passage. And the moon. Where does it come from? From the sky? From another sky? Why ask this question? Whatever comes comes and it does not really matter where it comes from. It is in front of you and you should decide whether you deal with it or not. You have no wish to deal with it. You send it to Hell where it belongs. Obediently it goes to Hell. After the argument, you are filled with remorse. So you say, 'Please, don't go to Hell. I'm sorry, I was wrong. Please, go to Paradise.' And it goes to Paradise. You envy it; you wish you could go to Paradise yourself. So you say to yourself, 'Go to Paradise.' You disobey yourself: you do not move from where you are. And you are *not* in Paradise. So you say to Paradise, 'Go to Hell.'

A voice goes from one note to another. So does one's life, but one does not hear these notes. One does not even hear oneself. One is not oneself and does not want to become oneself. One wants to become another, the other, because one is either too rich or too poor. If one is too poor, one does not want to become poor; one wants to become rich. If one is rich, one may be embarrassed about one's riches. One may feel embarrassed about undressing in front of the doctor. Displaying one's riches is somewhat identical to this striptease. Any striptease is shameful so one hides one's riches. One buys a modest car and drives through a modest landscape. One buys a hamburger and drinks a glass of Coke. One is an ordinary one. Actually one is two: rich and poor. Ones' grave is one.

Daring is nothing. One goes forward, leaps forward, jumps up and up and up. One looks down and sees oneself on the floor. One is grovelling under the sofa, trying to find one's contact lens. That is what it comes down to: daring, daring. One dares and grovels. One is God and not God. One is one and two and three. And three is also doomed to grovel under sofas, under other pieces of furniture – till Doomsday. So is Doomsday. It grovels under the world, looking up from time to time. What is up? Moonday, Mousseday. Ending a relationship is always hard but in this case it is for the best. One ends one's relationship with Doomsday, punishments and eternal fires. One feels free to interrupt one's destiny that says, 'You're doomed.' One answers, 'I have very much to feel joyful over at the moment.'

I wander in the dark, in the light. And there are no alternatives; or there are only alternatives. There is a cross; you go along this cross as if it was a street and turn right. What you put your feet on is also a cross, even if you go left. But this cross has nothing to do with Christ. There are crosses in the history of humanity and also in everyday life. You see a cross and you explore it with your feet and brain. You see nothing but it is also a cross: nothing is a cross. You have enough of crosses and you wish you could live inside a rectangle. You *are* inside a rectangle. What can you do inside it, outside it? You can become what you are or what you are not. You become what you are not and find yourself inside a square. And also outside – outside of the inside.

It is not a foreign language. Everyone understands it because it is a *human* language. Everyone speaks and understands it. A human being raises his or her hand. You understand what it means. It means there is a hand and it is raised. There is a human who raises his or her hand. So he or she wants to speak. Or he or she just wants you or somebody else – he or she – to select another human who could preside over the destinies of other humans or animals or plants. There are hes or shes or plants or lakes. You preside over their trial. Trial by jury is a fundamental right, and you are a member of this jury; and of that jury. Newspapers talk about you, 'It was a very complicated trial that went on for months.' Yes. And you decided that everyone and everything had every right to live forever.

Creation is an eternal process. Everything and everybody are in the making – not only God. Another disaster is in the making. This disaster has just been made. Where? In China, in India, in the United States of Europe. This is one of the worst natural disasters ever to befall the area, as they say. And they continue to talk. Their talk is also in the making. What do they make of it? A disaster of course. What is the result of their making? Everything was going smoothly until suddenly disaster struck. Everything was going; everything was in the making. They ought to have stopped everything instead of making it go towards the disaster. Whatever goes goes to disasters. Stop it! Stop it! Too late, as usual. Another disaster, another hope, another disaster, another hope.

All things return to their origins. They know where their origins are and on the verge of death return to them so as not to get lost. If they stay where they are, they get lost in the kingdom of death. Of course they die in the end – even in the kingdom of their origins. But in this case – within this kingdom – their deaths are as sweet as the sweetest dreams. They are lulled into death, so to speak. The origins sing a number of lullabies and gradually all things fall asleep. Their ends look and sound like an eternal fall. For whatever reason their parachutes fail to open. They continue to fall through their origins as if resolved to find their bottoms and ends. But their origins are everywhere: inside the Earth, in the sky. Their roots are in the middle of the stars. They continue to fall through the stars.

You cannot be known because no one sees you. Many years ago you withdrew from the world and became nothing, no one, nobody. You have neither a body nor a soul. No one can say about you, ‘He was born with misshapen limbs.’ No one knows what your limbs look like, so no one says anything about your limbs. What is more, no one knows whether you have limbs or not. Perhaps you have no limbs, no eyes, no ears, no thoughts. Your brain is paralysed so you cannot think. You can move your stomach, for it is not paralysed. Your stomach exists; the rest of your substance does not. Actually you need neither the rest nor your very substance. You need only this stomach of yours that helps you enjoy food and wine. Enjoy, enjoy!

She is standing trial for murder. ‘I killed my husband because I couldn’t live with him any longer. And he wouldn’t divorce me, in spite of my demands. He wanted to keep me to himself – a totally selfish attitude. He wouldn’t let me go. He used to clutch my hands with a grip that was surprisingly strong for someone of his puny constitution. He used to whisper into my ear, “I’ll never let you go, never.” I asked my cousin to help me. He refused. He said that taking the life of a fellow creature was against human nature. So I had no alternative but to do it myself. I did it of my own free will. I killed him single-handedly. At last he let me go. Today, my body is as free as my will. In this court of justice I demand freedom from injustice.’

There is a sort of presence; inside and outside. There is a presence inside my body. I do not mean I have a stomach and a pair of lungs. I do have them, of course, otherwise I would not feel any presence, however big and important. I would not feel any absence either. By the way, I am an absence specialist, which means that I am good at the mathematics of absences. I count them day and night. As I count them I realise that every absence encloses a presence, however insignificant it may appear at first glance. An insignificant presence in a significant absence. That is what my life is about. Whatever I see is a huge absence, but at the very core of this absence there is a presence – the presence perhaps. And I am overawed by this presence.

Everything aims at truth; even untruth does. It says, 'I know I'm not true. But my untruth is true so I'm true to some extent. And this extent ensures my omnipresence.' We are tempted to scrutinise the outer and inner worlds in terms of truth and untruth. We squelch through the mud and suddenly our feet feel solid ground. We call this ground 'truth' and the mud is just the opposite of this truth. In a way, we deprive the mud of its existence. Whenever our feet and platform shoes squelch through it again, we wonder from which planet it has come. Surely on Earth there is nothing with the exception of truth. Only truth is allowed to live in our midst, otherwise we had better destroy our courts of justice. And then we say to each other than the mud *is* truth. At least it is true to itself.

Everything is underdetermined: our knowledge, objects, subjects. We look at a table; it is just a blur, not a table. What do we know about it? Perhaps it is not a thing in itself; perhaps it is a table in us and others. We can invite our friends, sit down at this table and eat a hearty meal washed down with two bottles of claret. But we should not forget that this dinner table is underdetermined. It is not really meant for dinners and suchlike. We put a dish on this table; the dish glides towards one of its edges and falls. We look at it and try to stop it, catch it. But the air is also underdetermined and so behaves like what we may call 'not-really-air'. It behaves like a Russian mountain – as far as the dish is concerned. The dish zigzags, dodges to avoid our hands and crashes into a wall.

According to Johannes Scotus, it was only as a result of sin that human beings were divided into male and female. In other words, you were an androgyne and your pastime was talking to serpents about knowledge and ignorance. You were thirsty for knowledge and power, and ate whatever you could lay your hands on. One of the dishes you ate was the forbidden dish. You fell asleep and, upon awakening, found a woman in your bed; and in your life. You made love for the first time and for the second time. Then you fell down and found yourself on Earth. A life of hardship and toil; a long life. In the end you died and got a spiritual body. You liked neither the word 'spiritual' nor the body. So you picked up an axe and split it into two sinful bodies.

What does my Time have to do with unemployment and the labour market? Are my clocks connected with the labour market, with any market? Through my computer? And unemployment? Is my computer a social democrat? Does it think I should participate in social life? Should I help somebody? How? By offering the poor my poems? My garden and strawberries? Could I offer them my past? Or their own past? The economy is crippled by deficit targets. The economy is crippled for life; so is life itself. A number of cripples who go somewhere. Last month our gun turret revolved until the gun was aimed at their advancing soldiers. The cripples disappeared into the woods. The trees got down on their knees and began to crawl towards Macbeth.

I do not drag women to the nearest bed without bothering to touch upon the weather and horse races, let alone art and the texture of life. I talk to them for a while; I smile, I smile. There are a few beds around us, but nowadays I prefer *distant* beds. I invite the women I am fond of to remote, foggy bedrooms at the risk of losing them on the way. But enough's enough; I am at the end of my journey. Let us forget about Italy, Switzerland and Bahamas. Here is the bed, the distant bed I have been heading for since my birth. I am not surprised to find it empty. I am not waiting for phone calls. I have forestalled them by disconnecting all the telephones in this castle of mine. Recently the last of my children moved out. Am I suffering from empty nest syndrome? I am not. I am not.

I wonder if Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, would have remembered Ophelia 20 years after her suicide. He might have remembered the ghost, though. After all, Ophelia did not say to him, 'Remember me.' Even now he does not remember her in spite of the play he watches on his computer – every other day. He also goes to theatres and complains about the actors who play his part. 'I'm not like that,' he says over and over again. Ophelia sings and swims, but he does not remember her. He remembers only himself and his father's ghost. Sometimes he rises from his seat, goes towards the stage and talks to the audience. 'Here I am, I am, I am. Don't believe Shakespeare. Don't believe anybody. Listen to what I'm about to say. List, list, O list.'

The life of Bach was that of an employee. Everyday life, routine. One cannot even say that in his music this everyday reality is invested with a sense of wonder and delight. And I am reluctant to speak about meditation and contemplation – in connection with his music. It is a natural expression of life. He did not even try to give expression to it. This was his job and duty. 'I'd be failing in my duty if I didn't write these fugues.' He never said anything like that. He was just writing notes. And these notes were not dictated to him by angels, whatever he might have thought. He was just living his life. He never went outside it so as to transcend the world and its routine. He did not need that. His routine had four main components: above, below, inside, outside.

I must have rejuvenated myself in the course of my last conversation with a young male student. I unburdened my consciousness and memory to the student who piled up my 65 years in the storeroom of his brain. (A storeroom for coffins.) The role of a professor is sacred; so is the role of a student. My student grew more and more mature as he listened to my explanations and confessions. He grew older; I grew younger. Soon we swapped our identities: I became the student and vice versa. The master becomes the slave, as Hegel put it. Today, I am both the professor and my own student. I am young and old, mature and immature. An unruly child; an old fogey. I hold out my hand and pull myself towards my own body lying in the grass.

An extension of Kafka's Law. 'The man continues to meditate on the guard's presumed attitude and draws his conclusions, makes his calculations. "Why doesn't he give me a *concrete* answer?" he reflects, casting a furtive glance at the guard. "His answers are noncommittal, elusive, and so is his whole attitude." Hastily the man concludes that the guard has an attitude and that his attitude is noncommittal. And the man rejoices at his conclusions. He knows *something*. He has sized up the guard *and* the problem itself which is indissolubly linked to the guard. This man does not seem to have a wife. Had he been a family man, he would not have come here, especially if his wife was an actress. Beauty dissolves laws. Desires and longings crush them into powder.'

'Our system for handling end-of-life care is largely broken and should be overhauled at almost every level. The first level relates to the truth we hide from our patients. Of course they are dying, but we say to them, "If you walk five miles each day before breakfast, you'll be hale and hearty." We forget that the individuals we are talking to cannot move, let alone walk five miles. On the other hand, we avoid the word "cancer" and that is the word we should utter whenever we see these individuals or dying patients. If we talk to them about cancer, they will devote the rest of their lives to prayers. And of course we should campaign for the right to euthanasia. What is the ideal end-of-life care system? You ask, "Have you prayed tonight?" and give him or her an injection.' From the diary of a doctor.

You have your own clone. Your double, your triple. They manufacture you because you are a genius. And they want you to multiply and live forever: the Earth should not be ashamed of her inhabitants. If she is, she cannot do anything to redress the balance: these individuals are still alive and they are loath to bury themselves and their cousins, brothers, sisters and colleagues. They all walk across the Earth and humiliate her: they cannot do otherwise. They are so pathetic one gets the feeling they neither walk nor crawl. They are melting and nothing can stop them, not even death. They continue to melt in the Hereafter. They are neither in Hell nor in Paradise. They are an uncultural melting pot, a melting dot, a melting not. Ot, t, t, t, t. But this t walks across the Earth. Skipping. T, t. No longer o.

A peace conference, a war conference. They repent and pick up weapons. They talk about peace which is beautiful – as a word. You like the word 'peace', but you dislike the word '*paix*' which sounds like '*pet*' – fart. Whenever you speak about peace, your brother says, 'Stop farting about and help me tidy up.' You help your brother and sister; your house is clean and tidy now. That is what you may call 'peace'. The world is not small enough to allow you to tidy it up. You speak to one leader, to another leader. The first leader says, 'Opposing factions on the committee are refusing to compromise.' The second leader says, 'I disagree with the first leader.' By failing to reach an agreement they jeopardise the future of mankind and that of animals and plants. You go home.

I have a very suspicious nature. A colleague of mine advised me to invest some money in his project. I was suspicious at first; then I was filled with remorse. I took his advice because I was ashamed of myself. I was ashamed of my own suspicions, of my sixth sense. I wished to make it up to him, although he knew nothing about my suspicions. I wished to compensate for my mistrustful attitude towards him with a huge amount of money I was ready to invest in his business. 'But you should hurry,' he said. And I rushed into it. I ran twice as fast as he wanted me to. I overtook his expectations on the road to my own bankruptcy. I did all I could to out-Herod Herod. And I succeeded in my undertaking. For once I did not fail. Eventually I made it.

Now and then you wish to hide. You like wearing sunglasses: you feel you can hide behind them. But they hide only your eyes, nothing else. And people say, 'He has fights everywhere and walks around with a black eye.' So you crawl under a sofa and hide for half an hour. Then you crawl out and jump to your feet. You are satisfied: for half an hour you managed to hide from the world. Now you have an aura of invisibility and safety. You can walk as far as you wish without been molested and insulted. Instead of going to a psychoanalyst, every week you spend half an hour under your sofa. You do not talk to it; nor do you lie on it in the presence of a psychoanalyst. You lie *under* it and listen to those who sit down on it. They do not talk about you.

You should know therapeutic words. They are keywords, actually. You should slip them into your interior monologues, into the discussions you have with your colleagues. You know, there are cassettes designed to clean your VCR. It is a thing of the past of course. Now they clean themselves, our machines, our DVD players. Like cats, you know. Such words seem to perform the same function. They clean our vocabulary, our thoughts. Our thoughts should be cleaned now and then, otherwise they might get dirty. And our jokes should be clean, our ideas, our discourses upon the nature of life after death. In this way we clean the Hereafter and also our life on Earth. And we should recycle our waste speeches. Peace, love, good, virtue, freedom, democracy, benefit.

All goes smoothly and suddenly there is some sort of obstruction. You have no idea what causes this obstruction, but you are sure it is in the outside world, not inside your substance. But what is outside can also be found inside. And you find this obstruction after a while – inside, inside. Your thoughts bump into it; so does whatever you eat and enjoy in restaurants and at home. You begin a phrase and cannot finish it; the same goes for your meals. You are very talented and you feel this obstruction is blocking your progress. Ten years elapse without your being able to remove this hard inner obstruction. At last you succeed in removing it. Your trains of thought are infinite now; so are your meals. Progress has been made on all fronts.

Don't you feel comfortable in your bed now? You used to complain about it. Do you remember your complaints? 'My bed is too small, my bed is too narrow.' Now it has become large and soft. It is a double bed, in a manner of speaking. And you are alone in it. Aren't you comfortable in your double bed? It is a triple bed, you know. It is an infinite bed. You are not cramped for space, are you? Death is spacious, isn't it? Some say it is too spacious, too voluminous. Apparently the dead prefer our cramped condition to their death. I am not sure they are right. Eternity is better than time. Don't you think so? Don't you wish to thank your murderer, your benefactor? This murder released you from years of suffering. Life is pain, death bliss. Let us call this murder 'euthanasia'.

While biting into an apple, you do not speak. Generally speaking, you either speak or bite into vegetables and fruit. You can even bite into a piece of cheese instead of using a knife and a slice of bread. Sometimes it is the only way to prevent you from speaking. To keep silent, you bite into this and that; you bite your nails too. Your nails grow shorter and shorter; your body grows fatter and fatter. It is better to be fat than to talk nonsense. If you talk nonsense, you had better bite into whatever you see around you with the exception of human beings. For instance, you must on no account bite their ears or noses. You say, 'At the risk of seeming rude, I'm afraid I have to eat this apple now.' And you bite into it. It is better to be rude than doubly rude.

St Paul says something to the effect that God cuts our thoughts in the middle to see what they are made of; to see their contents and intentions. He knows what our ideas are only because He can massacre our thoughts, skin them and investigate their insides. The dead thoughts' insides are spread all over the snow and God bends over them, tramples upon them. Many people imitate God in this respect. They do not respect you at all. (Does God respect you?) They tear your thoughts to shreds and put them into a pie. They ask you to eat this pie. Of course, in the course of your dinner, their servant pours Petrus 1947 into your glass. You eat your thoughts and find them delicious. They *are* delicious but you have lost them forever. You cannot have your thoughts and eat them.

What do you say? For once, you do not say anything. This time, however, you *should* say something – even stuff and nonsense will do. Any stuff, any nonsense. Silence is unbearable. Any word is bearable, whatever the number of letters it displays as you utter it; or write it down. They keep silent at the wrong moment. They are always wrong – from my point of view. They, others, judges. Legions, regions. In every region you are a prophet; a false prophet. They do not recognise you, beat you, imprison you. You complain and are happy, for you have grounds to believe you *can* complain. You are brutally beaten and complain. Your long list of complaints reaches the Supreme Being's office; or the Supreme Court. You are given ten pounds and you do not say anything.

A joyful tune. So many dances have been missed, forgotten. I have missed the dance of letters. Let them dance for a while. They do not want to. Let them say I am wrong. I have always been wrong. I have walked through my life and you are still out, away, nowhere. You are not the other, the One, Thou. You are just you and I will always save you from death. That is not all. Death is unlikely to save us from life. I am buying a modest car. I drive in it to a distant wall and crash into it. A modest death. I am a socialist, a communist; or just a modest person. My modesty goes to death and comes back. I am immodest enough to come back. I will always come back: modest, immodest, a man of genius, a listener, a witness, a chronicler, a mystic, a *lystik* (a diminutive of 'leaf' in Russian).

In my youth I was not like that. Even in my middle age. Now I am on the edge and you know what one can do under the circumstances. One looks down; one no longer looks up. One is unlikely to fall up so it is better not to look up. Time is running out and one has no time for outside things. One is already at the bottom of the precipice – to some extent. And this extent grows bigger and bigger. One longs to know what awaits one at the bottom. And one must have some inkling of what lies in store for one. Not just one bottom – a series of them. So I cannot be as joyful as I was in my youth and even later when I was still far from bottoms and skies. It is better to be far from everything except pleasures, joys – the sheer pleasure of existence. You are far away. Yet you are in the centre.

Physical objects are nothing more than convenient myths. Why are they convenient? Because we can pick them up and hold them for a while, saying to ourselves, 'I'm holding the world. It's not a myth or just a representation. I can eat the world. I can put it in my bed. I can sleep with the world. My representation is sure to change in the course of my sleep. But the world will always be by my side – at least till dawn.' No, it is just a myth. You cannot hold anything. And if you do hold an object or a subject – a woman, for instance – this subject is Aphrodite. Can you hold Aphrodite? You could if she was not a myth. And the pipe you are holding is also a myth, even if you blow a puff of smoke into the air. Can you hold this smoke? Hardly. Besides, this smoke is without fire.

I have no idea what the Oedipus complex is and how to fight it. Why should I fight it if I do not feel anything of the kind? I love both my mother and father. But I have never kissed my mother with my father's lips. Nor with my own lips, needless to say. I do kiss my mother goodnight, but I seldom kiss her on the mouth. And if I do, my libido does not wake up. It goes on sleeping. Many years ago I kissed it goodnight and ever since it has been sleeping – not in my bed, though. I am not addicted to self-abuse, you know. My father and mother no longer sleep in the same bed. Incidentally, I was not in the habit of making the bed in which my father and mother used to cuddle up under the blankets. To tell the truth, I never make my own bed. I just lie in it.

Paranoia. ‘There was a pain somewhere inside me. A *painless* pain, so to speak. A palpitation, a shiver of premonition. I was afraid of him. Presently my common sense interposed between my sixth sense and my mind. (The common sense is the seventh sense.) I told myself I was stupid. “He’s slightly drunk, that’s all there is to it,” I told myself. “I’m a very bad friend. How dare I suspect my friend of such a thing? I don’t even know what thing I’m thinking about. But I do know I’d better be on my guard. I’d better run away.”’ A man is screaming and running down a number of steps. The number of these steps grows continuously, but the man goes on running instead of stopping in his tracks. ‘The longer and faster your run-up is, the higher you can jump,’ he mutters to himself.

We reject one theory and falsify another. We reject everything and sit back enjoying life as it is. And yet it is not, according to another rejection and falsification. The world might have been falsified at some point, at all points, but you live and enjoy this cake. You have it and eat it. What else do you need? Another cake? Why? Why should you reject the one you ate a few minutes ago? It is still on the dinner table. So you eat it and leave it where it is so as to eat it again in a few minutes. The cake is on the table and if you say, ‘It is not,’ you may be accused of falsification of evidence. Let us take an example: ‘Her love for him was evident in all that she did. And then she ditched him.’ Another falsification of evidence? She did ditch him. She married a multimillionaire and lives in London now.

You change your mind. Why? Your mind is not different now so you had better stick to your first idea and plan. But your surroundings *are* different and you should adjust to the change, if you wish to live till tomorrow. So you change your mind – even your *mind* should be changed to cope with the new situation that is completely different. One might say we are living in a different world now, in a different universe. It is not true of course: there is only one world where we got stuck a long time ago. And there is only one situation, one set of rules. The point is we contemplate these rules from different angles. The current angle or view differs from the last one in many important respects. Yet we still have the same bodies, the same rheumatism.

You are resolved to erect a monument to yourself. You look at a mountain and whisper, ‘The monument was hewn out of the side of a mountain.’ But you are a mountain, and your monument should not be smaller than yourself. Future generations might think you were not a mountain after all – just the side of a mountain or a hill. So you build a huge pedestal and put it in a desert where nothing will ever prevent your future admirers from seeing it from a distance. But the pedestal you have already built is not huge enough; in the desert it looks tiny, unimportant. Of course you are loath to compare yourself to a desert: you are a veritable cornucopia of ideas and images. You compare yourself to the universe. It would be a good idea to build the universe and put it in a desert.

You are worried about the universe. It may be destroyed either by the second law of thermodynamics or by a few atom bombs. Or by both: no atom bomb is in a position to destroy the second law and its funeral march. What to do? Even if you drop a thousand bombs on Iran, you are unlikely to destroy it *completely*: Iran is a big country. And even if you destroy it completely, there might remain a few atom bombs in some underground cave or other. Like everything else, the universe tries to persevere in its being. How to support this effort? You erect a few pillars that are supposed to symbolise duration and stability. You think that thanks to these pillars the universe will last forever. After all, symbols are deeper than ordinary things. They transcend both time and space. And laws.

If a pharaoh wished to prove he was able to reign magnificently, he had to run fast: his political vigour seemed to stem from his strong constitution. Deleuze, on the other hand, thinks that your puny constitution and diseases may help you write masterpieces. You cannot run fast; you cannot run at all. But you write one book after another. The spirit is willing because the flesh is weak. The faster your spirit runs, the slower your legs and feet grow. In the end they are bound to stop altogether. This end will be the beginning of a newborn spirit which will reach the speed of light. You will become an enlightened being. You will deliver sermons on the importance of compassion. And you will communicate with God by means of Morse.

Your senses receive a piece of information. Your brain examines the senses' input and corrects it in accordance with its ideas and notions. Whether these ideas and notions are correct or not does not matter: the brain *must* correct the senses that do not think. Nor does science think, according to Heidegger, but that does not matter – not for the moment. So the brain's output is different from what it gets from the senses that err like brainless humans. When the final result is calculated, greater weighting is given to the brain's output than to whatever the senses talk about as they transfer the outside world to the brain. Then the senses fall in love but the brain rejects this on the ground of its absurdity. What? In love with a whore? This time, however, greater weighting is given to the senses.

Your health is no longer your health: someone else takes care of it. This is negative care. Someone takes your liver and begins to massage it. Instead of massaging your ego, this someone takes a sort of anti-care of your liver. They take blood and urine specimens for analysis and they say you are on the verge of death. Your liver, they say. My liver, you answer. Why not free your liver from this person's grip? You used to be healthy – in your youth perhaps. Now your liver spoils the harmonious relations between your body and mind. Your mind knows what you must do; your body disobeys it because it wants to do something else. Well, do something else. Let eagles eat my liver and the rest of my body. What do I care about my body, this spoilsport, spoilsoul?

Trudge, trudge, trudge. This is the final act and the final curtain is ready to drop. You continue to jump on the stage. You walk up and down the stage. You talk to the audience or their absence, their numerous absences. You talk to the stage. You no longer talk to yourself because you do not listen to yourself. You have never listened to yourself. Why should you? You talk nonsense and the advice you give to yourself should be followed neither by yourself nor anyone else. Anyway, no one is likely to follow your advice. No one will ever follow you. They have not even followed you onto this stage. What are you doing here? Walking, talking? Playing your part, someone else's part? You are in part, you are the smallest part of yourself. It is time, it is time. The curtain is in the middle.

You extract goals from needs. You need this and that. What is your goal? To get this and that. That is how your consciousness works. Do you really need it? You just see something and get it. If you see something, you need it; otherwise you would not have spotted it some time ago. You need your eyes for this operation; and your right hand. You pick this diamond up and sell it. You get a lot of money and buy a sports car. You see a ruby and put it in your pocket. You buy a villa on the Riviera. You see the world and extract your goals from it. Your consciousness used to say, 'We must ensure that we do not set ourselves goals that are not attainable.' But your consciousness is far away and you know that all goals are attainable. Your body knows that.

Could we justify anything? Everything is unjustifiable. Even saints are wrong. They see something else, not our everyday life, our streets. They see the city of God, the global village of the Holy Spirit. So there is something wrong with *our* global village. Either it is not global enough or it is not a village. It might be the city of Good. It is not. Nor is it the city of Bad. It is not a city at all; nor is it a village. Just a mess. Saints live in a remote global village. It is a fishing village. Its main aim in life is to fish men. It has already fished a few saints who are fishermen and fisherwomen. But they cannot fish for men in heaven. Only in our global village can they fish for them; and for women. Saints live in their Mass and our mess. They talk about sins, laws and walk from one mountain to another.

Muslims are luckier than we are. We are in a very exposed position – not only during our prayers. We have no idea where the centre is and so turn this way and that as we pray or just live through another day. Muslims turn towards Mecca – not only during their prayers. In a way, they always look in the direction of Mecca and this direction bolsters their confidence and fortifies them physically. We just go down on our knees and pray. We know the words of our prayer, but not its direction. Is it God-oriented, Satan-oriented, business-oriented? We often ask the Almighty to give us money. We always look in the direction of money and turn towards it whenever we are able to turn. Even if we are paralysed, we turn towards money. Even the blind look at it.

‘The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband,’ says St Paul. And he adds, ‘And likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.’ All right. Our bodies do not belong to us. However, Paul’s assertion has nothing to do with the following poetical licence: ‘You have my heart and I have yours.’ You cannot function properly when you are deprived of your whole body, not only of your heart. And Paul deprives you of your stomach, your liver, your intestines. Only your soul remains with you. But what can you do with your soul in your body’s absence? Your soul must live in a body. That is what is called ‘incarnation’. Your wife takes your body and puts it in a vase. She thinks you are more handsome in a vase: you look like a bunch of roses.

Are we partially or entirely moulded by our environment? We mould our environment into something we want it to be – to suit our needs and fantasies. We fell trees and pollute lakes and rivers. We build walls across rivers and call them ‘dams’. Not to be outdone, our environment moulds us into communists and monarchists. You come from a poor immigrant family. You are ill-treated by both authorities and the rich: after all, you are an immigrant and poor. So you become a communist; yet you have got aristocratic genes and your blood is as blue as your eyes. But your environment is more powerful than your genes. Only equality and fraternity can cope with your frustrations. In your country of adoption you become a member of the proletariat. So you unite.

Inspired by Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and their writings, you feel like devoting a few hours to meditation. You feel an overwhelming urge to meditate upon your trials and tribulations; and also upon the beauty of the universe. You walk in your garden and try to meditate. You do not succeed: one should not walk when deep in thought. So you stop and sit down. But there is too much light in the garden; the sun shines in your eyes. You shut them but the morning sun shines through your eyelids. You rise, go back to your house, to its remotest closet. There is only one window in this closet. Subdued lightning, mirrors everywhere. You look at yourself and realise that even your thoughts are multiplied by the mirrors. They replenish the universe and meditate upon it.

How much happiness or pain will you experience next month? You do not know whether you are ill or not. Some doctors must know something, but they say nothing and you fear they are hiding the truth. No happiness, only pain, endless pain. Oddly enough, happiness is never everlasting; only pain is in spite of death. Death puts an end to happiness and family lives; pain is in a class of its own. Pain is beyond good and evil, beyond life and death. It is always in your body and also outside it. That is what the Buddha calls ‘fire’. Your passions are painful; so are your wishes. Even your happiness is an insidious manifestation of pain. Surely it is hypocritical to condemn pain and support happiness, harmony, health, order, the arts?

I am a personal assistant as distinct from a secretary. As usual I hesitate as to my identity because only those who have no identity whatsoever know who they are. I am the personal assistant of some minister or other. For once, let us not speak of gods and angels. I always promise to myself not to speak of God but I fall back on Him whenever in need of an assistant. Of course the gods are neither assistants nor secretaries: they are the gods, full stop. They govern the world they created a long time ago. Times are long; so are spaces. And we are lost in both, as usual. There are no we, no I, no you. There is some weyoui who says he is cosmic. He is probably comic but never mind, never mind. Everything is a comic strip, a tragic striptease. Say what you wish. No one listens to you.

You fall back, back. Only the past is your friend because it is a proof. Not of your existence, surely not. You are the past in part and the past is under your feet. So your feet are above your past and under your future. Where are your arms? Perhaps in the present. You touch this and that, and you hold in your hands whatever takes place or just is, is, was, were. Whatever you speak of exists and you hold this existence, your own life and drive. You hold them, let them go. You also go along a straight line – as far as the eye can see. That is when music comes to the fore. You say, ‘It, just, all, see, nonsense, sense, why, dry, May, lay.’ Music does not say anything. It is in between saying and going. Music penetrates gloom and doom; and light, lots of lights.

The sun leaves nothing unenlightened. And what about branches, towers, their shadows? Shadows are also enlightened – in the City of God. How could you rest in the shadow of a tree? In that City? You build the City of God where you manage to open spaces: the virtuous are welcome, you seem to insinuate. Whatever you say is nonsense, rubbish and gibberish. Build your city; do not talk too much. First you build God and this God of yours builds the city you are dreaming about. This God builds your dreams, constructs bridges, buildings and stories, arguments. You write in your notebook, ‘I’m worshipping an idol. Every shadow is an idol; so is the sun. I’m weary and thirsty for knowledge. I wish to know myself. Am I also an idol, for want of anything better? I am neither better nor worse.’

So long as you do not interfere with the freedom of others, you may do whatever you like. Your thoughts are free too. Are you allowed to interfere with the freedom of your thoughts? Perhaps not. And what about your personal life? Are you allowed to destroy yourself? You drink, smoke and eat too much. Your diet is high in fat; you are obese. So what? Your obesity does not interfere with the freedom of others. On the contrary – it helps your doctor enjoy what they call ‘high life’. You suffer from diabetes and your heart is not what it used to be in your youth. You do not listen to your doctor who constantly interferes with your freedom; nor do *you* interfere with your freedom. You eat your friends out of house and home.

The future looks black; so does the past. The present does not look at all. What is the present? Blackness, whiteness? Is it colourful? It is not. The present does not exist: only the future and the past inhabit your mind, for they have no other lodging. Hopes and memories. Your present is limited to this cup of tea you are drinking. Yes, the present is a cup of tea. It is probably *your* cup of tea. The present is the word 'tea', the word 'present'. And your last electrocardiogram. And the suffering you will endure the day after tomorrow. You were last seen alive five days ago. Since then you have been seen dead. Tomorrow you will also be seen dead. You had better not look at yourself in mirrors; nor should you listen to yourself. You were last heard alive four years ago. For a while you hummed a tune.

How does the soul enter the body? It lives high up, amidst the stars – no doubt about that. It learns a lot in the course of its starlife. Every soul is a born teacher so it yearns to teach its knowledge to bodies, to humans. It thinks that all human beings should model themselves on the stars, on their way of life and death. Yes, they die from time to time, but their deaths are beautiful – nothing to do with human death and dearth. Startime, starpace, stardust, starashes. All this the soul yearns to teach to the body it is bound to meet on condition that it takes the trouble to come down. It does come down and finds a body. It enters it and starts its teaching. The body hears only the word 'star'. And the mind starts playing with it. The stars of the silver screen. How many stars has this restaurant got?

'I discharge no impurities. No filth oozes from my substance. I have no substance, no filth. Excrement is the solid waste matter that is passed out of one's body through one's bowels. I have no bowels. Consequently – no excrement. The substances form in the bladder and make it very painful to urinate. I have no bladder. Urine is the liquid you get rid of when you go to the toilet. I have no urine, no toilet, no liquid of any kind. I have thoughts but they neither urinate nor ooze from my mind. I do have my mind. That is why I pay visit to the quick: my mind is bent on scaring them out of their wits. Do they have any? Well, I scare them out of something, of someone. I want them to be out. Out of touch, out of mind. I am just out of body.' From the diary of a ghost.

The problem of communication is out of fashion – at least in the domain of the arts. In real life it is still rather topical. A talks to B about C. He talks to her for at least five minutes. Suddenly she says, 'But I thought that D was married to E. Son of a bitch. How can he betray such a wonderful wife?' 'I'm speaking about C,' says A. 'Really? I'm not surprised then. C has always been a bastard to his wife. I'm faithful to my husband, you know. Of course all husbands are devils incarnate, but I like mine. Do you know what he did yesterday?' And B talks about her husband's quirks and foibles for eight minutes. A is not interested in B's husband; nor is he in love with B. He is neither jealous nor interested, but he listens to her out of politeness, wasting his time. That is communication for you.

The body, being compound, is not immortal – it goes without saying. You say it to remind everybody that the soul *is* immortal. ‘Bodyguard’ is also a compound so bodyguards are not immortal either. You give an example: ‘Salt is a compound of sodium and chlorine.’ So salt is mortal: you can eat it or dissolve it in warm water. But sodium is not a compound; nor is chlorine. They are therefore immortal. The body is not immortal; some parts of it are, however, for they are not compounds. Let us take one tooth. Is it a compound? Of course a set of dentures *is* a compound. False teeth fixed to a small piece of plastic. One tooth, be it false or authentic, is *not* a compound. So it is immortal. It will survive the rest of your body and live eternally with your soul.

‘She has a breathy, clear, deep, soft, fruity voice. Let her talk as long as she re-kindles the fire of the Buddha’s sermons, as long as she reflects my Book of Changes, as long as my Christmas tree sprouts from her body. A real husband is a father in disguise. Many husbands hold their wives on their laps. Every night I experience a succession of violent, erotic dreams. At some point she sat down on my stomach and began to suck my nipples while rubbing the rest of my body with her fingers and nails. After a while she left the room but quickly returned, took off my boots and carried me into the shower. There we kissed for a while and she told me to lather her. I obeyed her command, lingering on her private areas. They were no longer private.’ From the diary of a man in love.

Humanity is nostalgia-stricken. The Russian Revolution. Princes abandon their palaces and flee the country. They settle down in Western Europe and become taxi drivers or waiters. Talking about Russia and their former lives invariably makes them feel nostalgic. A man was born into a rich family. He is 40 years old. Now and then he is told a story related to his grandfather who was a shoemaker. His was a classic tale of rags to riches. His grandson is nostalgic for the rags from which his grandfather rose to riches and glory. The grandson buys cheap cars, plonk and pizzas. ‘It’s silly to go to the expense of buying new clothes when you don’t really need them,’ he says with a smile. He does not have to say anything to this effect: everyone can see he does not need them. He needs rags.

A rare moment of happiness. What to do with it now? Now it is a source of regret and tension. Why doesn’t it come again? Why does life refuse to go back to the happiness you experienced last year, or in your youth? Because Time is not circular, whatever they say. Anyway, they say whatever comes into their heads. A lot comes into their heads in addition to the moments of happiness they lost a long time ago; or yesterday. But unhappiness is back, as usual. It does not need their circular time, their eternal recurrence, to come back and spread over a week, a month. It continues to spread as if it was cancer. It is not always a cancer, but it continues to spread. In the end they say, ‘It started off as cancer of the liver but it spread to other areas of life.’

You tremble to think what will happen when he finds out. He or she; they, them. You keep your shameful secret for years. You are used to living with it. There is nothing in your life except this shameful secret, this shame. ‘Shame on you, shame on you,’ you say now and then. What’s the use of talking to yourself? You should make a clean breast of it and admit you stole the money. You also stole someone’s life. You do not recall the identity of the corpse, but you recall the theft, the deed. Today you are stealing your joy, your radiance. You used to see the sun in the middle of the night. Now you do not see it in broad daylight. You must have stolen the sun from the sky. You must have stolen the North, the South, the East and the West. You are right in the middle of your secret.

Essence, existence, eternal truths. I read about them and think I am not eternal. Perhaps I am a part of some eternal truth, but I am only a part of it. I am neither eternal nor infinite. Just a part. I wish to be a whole, to enjoy wholly this and that. But this is also a part, nothing else. There is no such thing as this that. This that it would be even better. It does not exist either. You see the existence of the world; you do not know its essence. Is it the Earth? Is it a grain of sand? A grain of wheat, rice? A grain of truth? A grain of truth is the essence of the world. That is why they call it ‘eternal’. Of course you can sow this field with barley. So what? This field is neither eternal nor infinite. Just a field, nothing else. A few cows are standing in one corner of this field. They do exist.

Everything is contingent. If you think about everything, you realise that all this might not have come into existence. It did for some reason and you wish to find out what this reason is and where it is situated. This reason made an effort on the day of your birth. Perhaps it can make another effort – on the day of your death. If this reason exists at all, it must be a life-begetting reason. In this case it does not really matter if you are in your mother’s womb or on your deathbed. Even before your appearance in your mother’s womb, this reason must have taken care of you. It must have pampered you with milk and honey as it prepared you for a nine-month stay in your mother’s hospitable body. But is this reason sufficient enough to propel you to eternity, to Paradise? Is it *self-sufficient*?

A possessive mother. ‘You really are a model son. Always confiding your secrets to your mother. And you don’t invent pretexts to spend your time outdoors. Do you see anybody except your mother? Never. You never meet anybody on the sly. You tell your mother, “Why don’t go for a walk with our only child?”’ And you have a walk with your mother. You keep your promise. You never call off our rendezvous. You don’t think about other people in my presence – about a different mother, for instance. You have no wish to leave me. You never go on business trips. You’re very young. Young people don’t work. Anyway, you wouldn’t leave me, would you? Even if you were an adult? You wouldn’t work. Why should you? We’ve got enough money. You should read and play with me.’

So be it. Let it be. We might say all that from time to time, but we do not accept our destiny. Whatever we might say on the subject. So be it. Let it be. Surely such a horrible idea could never gain acceptance here. Where? In my house, in my mind. Why should I accept my rotten liver? Why should I accept rot? In any shape or form? Dry rot, for instance? Yesterday my gardener told me that rot had got into the furniture. He said nothing about my body. And mind. So be it. The rot sets in and does not go away. Why don't I say, 'Get away with you'? I do say that. Nothing doing. Grammar does not *always* help you. It does, from time to time. Anyway, some understanding of grammar is fundamental to learning the language of life. But life is deaf: it cannot hear you.

Why shouldn't your left hand know what your right hand is doing? Because your right hand – and any righteous right hand – does not want you to know what it is doing. Even *you* are not supposed to know that, let alone your left hand. Why? Because your right hand is open-handed, big-hearted and compassionate. It does not want you to have the slightest inkling of its generosity. That is how a true benefactor of humanity acts and thinks. Your left hand is even more magnanimous than the right one. Its generosity knows no bounds, especially when it hears a cry for help. Even if it hears only a whisper for help, it swings into action. This whisper depletes its bank account. The money is donated by an anonymous benefactor whose index finger does not know what their thumb does daily.

The world is waiting for me – that is what many of us think. The world did not even wait for Alexander the Great who was riding through the world on his own initiative. Somebody might have waited for him here and there; the world did not care. The world really does not care whether you ride or not. You think you are giving the world a ride because, in your opinion, the world is broken and cannot move on its own. Of course it is broken, but even a broken planet can move around the sun. It does and you are left in the lurch. You live in the lurch. You seem to lurch from crisis to crisis. A nervous breakdown, another breakdown. You go broke; you are a broken man or woman. But you continue to move – around the sun, around the moon. On your own initiative.

You say you are in love. What kind of love do you experience? You are in love with a woman. 'Do you desire this person?' they ask. Is the love you experience sexual, sensual or spiritual? Is it Platonic or Aristotelian? The Aristotelian variety of love must stick to the Middle Way. No, no middle ways: you always go to extremes. All right. But is it spiritual or not? Is it a *divine* love? If it is, it is deprived of desire, sensual overtones and the rest of this paraphernalia. Yes, it is deprived of any paraphernalia, assuming it is the right word used rightly under the circumstances. So you love this person spiritually. You give her a spiritual kiss and a platonic idea. You go to a spiritual bed and sleep spiritually, grinding your teeth.

There was no act of creation. What they call Creation is just the world, and the world has always been there. What the world could do without the world? Living without the world makes no sense. And life is omnipresent. Anyway, we should not let death triumph. We should kill death and if we do, life will be everywhere. We must have killed death at the very beginning, for life has always been there and here. Our individual life is not eternal, but life in general is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. Why? Because it is the very source of love. But for love and its eternal presence, the world would make no sense. And it does make sense, even if this sense is nonsense. Yes, nonsense is not nonsensical, whatever you may think. It is nonsense to say that life is nonsensical.

Why should one thing exist rather than the other? Because the thing that exists is good, otherwise it would not exist. There is no point in creating bad things: they make life unbearable. And life should be bearable, otherwise we would not be able to bear it. There are no points anywhere, anyway; no points, no uses. Somehow we get used to the situation, although we scream from time to time. We scream, sob and say to each other, 'I'm under a lot of strain. Just bear with me.' They bear with us and the show goes on. Why does the show exist? A non-show is better than any show, whatever they say. Of course they say they need shows, bread and butter. But we should not listen to them because they talk nonsense. Talking sense puts a lot of strain on the mind.

You have to choose between anarchy and despotism: there is no third way, middle way, any other way. There are no ways: only anarchy and despotism exist in the world. Politicians keep talking about democracy; they do it to make us forget there is no such thing as democracy. Any democracy is despotism in disguise. This despotism is everywhere: they control us through language, goods, Good as opposed to Evil, God. 'Governments must cooperate if they are to fight international terrorism,' they say. We fight this and other terrorisms everywhere; we get killed. And if we do not, we are frightened, glued to the television. They control us through institutions, communications. 'What we are witnessing is the country's slow slide into anarchy,' they said once. Despotism was born.

We play with ideas and ideas play with us. Then we face reality that has no ideas. Reality is full of realities and we have to face them, otherwise we shall die. All the time we face something or other, somebody or other. They all have faces – even things have faces. Even things in themselves have faces and we can see them as we look into things and possibilities. Philosophers often talk about human faces. They say that human faces are the sources of knowledge and love. We know the world through faces. Theologians say we had better not know anything; everybody says that ignorance is bliss. Priests keep everybody in blissful ignorance. They know what is in store for us but they keep the truth under wraps. They just talk about the face of God and we look at His face.

You are likely to forget about health, if you are healthy. Suddenly you are reminded of it by an illness that is prepared to kill you. It does not kill you at once. For a while it lets you talk about health. You say that nothing is more important than health. If you are healthy, your mind is in full working condition; so is your body, mind you. You can both swim and think. You do so and you are happy. And you are in love with everybody – with humanity, extraterrestrials and mice. You no longer allow your cats to eat them. So you live and forget your illness. And then you are reminded of it – in a hospital, of all places. You go on a diet but it is too late. You remember both your illness and former health. You wish to forget them. You do forget them.

Anna Karenina. Films, films, films. Once again I experience Anna's love and death. They fall in love; he falls out of love. She falls and dies. Trains, country bumpkins, bad omens, forebodings. No good omens, even if love triumphs for a while. Whenever they speak of eternal love, they speak of God. And God no longer speaks. Levin yearns to hear Him. At least he is searching for truth. He finds it in wheat fields, a scythe in his hands. The truth is in the scythe, not in the sky. His brother dies; just another death. Coughing, coughing, coughing. Dying, dying, dying. Karenin speaks of his wife's and his own duty; and of decency. What is decent? What is not? Not? Everything is and does, everything and everybody. What remains of all that misery? The death of Vronsky's horse. Frou-Frou, Frou-Frou.

One of the many benefits of social life is learning how to deal with your troubles. Your colleagues suggested you should meet and you agreed. You might not have agreed to this suggestion: they did not cajole you into doing what they wanted. But you agreed because you thought it might divert your attention from the problems you had been coping with for some time. Whatever diverts your attention from your hardships is always welcome. Desperate measures are needed to deal with the growing financial problem. You meet others. It is a desperate measure, given that you are addicted to solitude. Others do not lend you money; nor do they offer any *spiritual* solution to your problem. They just talk about *their* problems and you end up realising how happy you are.

Eva Braun. Her film on Hitler and herself; on their private and public lives. She liked gymnastics – doing handstands and cartwheels and jumping over bushes. Swimming, sunbathing. Yet she was aware of what was going on in the concentration camps. Loving Hitler in spite of everything. Being happier and happier. I am at the opposite side of humanity. Am I? Am I not a human being? Know thyself. You look for yourself inside yourself. You should also look outside, not only with a view to supplying a proof to the well-known Marxist doctrine that people's characters are determined by environment, not by heredity. You should also look at the past – not only at Leonardo da Vinci. To some extent you are both Hitler and Eva Braun. To what extent? Love for animals?

What is the language of nature? Our own language, no doubt. What else could it speak? Either it does not speak at all or speaks our language. In Russia it speaks Russian, in England English. Or it keeps silent. But there is a murmur one can hear when taking a walk in the woods. This murmur is set off to advantage by Wagner in his opera *Siegfried*. Perhaps music is harmonious and melodious enough to express the beauty of nature. And what about the paintings we see in museums and also in palaces, houses and huts? Some of them speak of nature and God. Nature speaks of God too, otherwise Spinoza would not have equated it with God. One should live in close communion with nature. How? By lying naked in the grass, for instance. Nature is naked; so are birds. No one clothes them.

You drop this plan, another plan. You like dropping plans and other things because it proves you live in vain and that is what you wish to prove so as not to regret the shortness of your life. You no longer regret it and live as a free man whose death is distant and insignificant. As they say, it is just another manifestation of life. You do not feel it anyway and now you do not have to read their books to know you can bear all this without going into hysterics and throwing tantrums. You do not fall into bed, crying, 'Mother, I'm going to die!' You take a walk, look at birds, admire their songs and sing yourself. Life is beautiful or rather you say to yourself that there is no life. It is just beauty and a feeling of well-being. Or rather no feelings, no beauty. Just light. Just just. An epileptic fit.

What if, what if. The Russians ask, 'What if mushrooms were growing in your mouth?' And they answer, 'If there were mushrooms in your mouth, this mouth of yours would be no mouth; it would be a kitchen garden.' Al right, your mouth is a kitchen garden: instead of talking, you grow vegetables. You know that silence lords it over words and vegetables are good for your health. Fresh vegetables, the ones that grow in your mouth. You gather them from your mouth and put them into a bowl. Olive oil, salt. Your salad is ready. That is how saints and ascetics live in their deserts. No one brings them food, contrary to what our legends say on the subject. Neither birds nor humans. They just do not talk. And if they do, they just say, 'What if. What if.'

You avoid paradoxes. What for? Anyway, avoiding paradoxes is just another paradox – a bigger one if compared to your previous paradoxes. Drinking a lot of water can often make you feel thirsty. No one doubts that this is a paradox. So what? This fact does not prevent you from emptying your cups of tea in which there is also a quantity of milk. Life is full of paradoxes; it is a paradox itself. Why should we live? Why should there be anything instead of nothing? This anything is a paradox we always come across in our lifetime. Our senses are this anything; so are our thoughts. Why do we think, move, eat? Why is there food instead of nothing? Food for thought, food for the stomach. And music of course. Why is there music? The biggest paradox? No more questions. Play on, play on.

All laws are weird, not only the laws of quantum logic, whatever they are. Why should an apple fall from its tree? Doesn't it like its tree? Yet it is not the Tree of Knowledge: you do not sin if you happen to grow on this tree. And as long as you do not sin, you can live wherever you like; doing whatever you like. You are an apple – not a forbidden apple, though. You ripen on your tree; and you ripen nicely. According to a weird law, you have to fall as soon as you reach your maturity. Why aren't you allowed to rot on your tree? On your mother? Why should you part from her? Is it fair? You flout this law and go on rotting on your tree. You rot and meditate on life and death. And on rot. Some people think you are weird doing meditation, but it works for you and that is all that matters.

Not only Socrates is allowed to benefit from the security services – from a *daimonion*, in other words or word. Even now, in Paradise, he takes advantage of his *daimonion*'s wisdom which enables him to avoid forbidden bushes and lakes. Everybody has a sort of *daimonion*, otherwise the Earth would be uninhabited. It is inhabited, isn't it? Let us not analyse its inhabitants' minds; let us not measure their dimensions and qualities. What counts is their presence on Earth. Our fellow creatures – not their intellects – continue to replenish our mother. They would do so even if they did not read the Bible. Those who are not acquainted with it traditionally have even more children than others. Their *daimonions* say, 'Both you and your children will starve to death unless you eat them.'

You own the speaking soul and the rational one. Of course the latter is far more important: according to Moses de Leon, it is sure to possess the supernatural power that brings man to perfection. So you should not talk too much; and if you do yield to the urge to talk, you have to think before talking. You should think twice, thrice, refraining from other thoughts. You should concentrate on what you are about to say. You bring your thought to perfection and once it is perfect, you give utterance to it. But your words are likely to mutilate your thought and even your souls, both of them. So you bring your words to perfection and realise how imperfect your body is in comparison with your future utterance. You systematically abuse your body with heroin and cocaine.

A point can expand evenly in one of two ways, circularly or linearly. A circle reminds us of spheres which reflect God more perfectly than anything else. Or they reflect primordial harmony or the harmony one can hear in the domain of music. If it becomes a line – the straight line of light – it goes back and forth as it seeks its ultimate structure in the form of man. The Cabbalists affirm that this line is of a higher degree than the circle – on account of its origin. No matter where it comes from. What counts is its direction, destination, its goal. Let us not forget that it is *man*-oriented; its goal is therefore his or her form. Luckily for us, a harmony one hears in music does not display this form. In a way, all music is spherical, God-like. And man is *not* created in God's image.

Mahomet said, 'If someone tells lies about me, he will seek a place for himself in Hell.' Dante thought that one is *allotted* a residence in the Hereafter. I think that Mahomet's solution to the problem is more logical – at least as far as Hell is concerned. It is also more cruel. If you find yourself in a circle of Hell, you know you cannot settle in another circle: neither Dante nor God will allow you such a manoeuvre. So you take a few deep breaths and calm down. But if you have to *choose* a place for yourself, you are in a bit of a predicament. What circle to choose? Of course you are tempted to go to the *Nobile Castello* where you might speak to Socrates. Alas, your guilty conscience is likely to interfere with your plan. In Hell your conscience is always guilty – a 33-fold increase in weight.

You leave your body and join yourself. That is how mystics experience their ecstasies: they must leave their bodies, otherwise they will join neither their souls nor God. You leave your body but your body has no intention of leaving you: it is your faithful servant. You wish to talk and your body graciously complies with your wish. You talk and eat; and have sex with your servants and a duchess. But for your body, such a feat would be out of the question. Yet you blame your body for its down-to-earth disposition: it does not fly as often as your soul does. You cannot fly. Your molecules were deposited on this floor last night. You fell asleep, had a dream and woke up. Your body was on the floor; so was your soul. The floor was partly covered with a dirty old rug.

Share, share. You should give as much as you get; even more, more, more. You give everything you own and no longer own anything except yourself, except yourself. That is your most precious possession: if you possess yourself, you possess the world. You also possess magical powers – like the roots of some plants. They cure you of everything; so do your magical powers. But no one compares you to Jesus Christ, not yet. You do not mind; you go on curing everybody and everything. You also cure the roots that have magical powers: your powers are even more magical than theirs. You share your powers with others and embrace them, while you are at it. But you have not raised anyone from the dead; so they stone you to death. You do not rise from the dead.

If you have only one soul, it takes care of everything – of the inner world, of the external world. But some individuals have two souls because they think one soul is not enough. Indeed it constantly goes back and forth as it takes part in both worlds where it acts on behalf of the body and mind. This soul often sits down and rests its weary legs. And no soul should ever sit down, otherwise it may lose momentum. If one has two souls, however, one does not need to worry about the future. I wake up and go to the window to find out if the weather is fine or not. I am both the soul and the body. Every day I just look at the sky and walk on Earth. I am upper and nether, inner and external, God and man, eyes and ears. I am probably the weather as well. I am fine.

‘You had no right to do it, no right at all,’ he or she blustered. What are they talking about? What rights, what doings? Even if you know what they mean, you are at a loss to understand why they drag rights into every conversation. You have lived beyond good and evil for many years. Of course you have every right to live where you live, provided you do not kill anybody. You can even covet your neighbour’s wife, hoping that she enjoys your covetousness and hides it from her husband. So you have every right to live as you do, and they should not remind you of their abstract rights whenever you deign to meet them. They should not bluster either. It is not right to treat another human being like that. And you are another human being. You are in a class of your own. You are classy; they are not.

You make no distinction between the heart and the head. So you do not always know what comes from the head, omitting to pay a visit to the heart. The head is believed to cool your sentiments; the heart warms them through. You can soften your decisions, ideas and categorical imperatives by warming them in your heart of hearts. At some point you grew tired of this procedure. Sending your thoughts to the heart, warming them at its core. Your thoughts used to go back and forth so often you ended up losing track of them. So now they stay where they are, for your heart has been in your head for several years. Anyway, you no longer make any distinction between them. Your heart grows cooler and cooler. You are a bit hot-headed and rash.

The word ‘liberty’ denotes something precious, although what it denotes is not clear. You leave your house and shout three four-letters words. You address them to the king, the president and the prime minister. Everybody hears you; nobody says anything. You are a revolutionary, an anarchist. You shout a few slogans; everybody listens to you. The country seems to be heading towards revolution. But you are not in prison yet: you live in a free country. As long as you do not kill anybody, you may do whatever you like. You are at liberty to shout yourself hoarse. You are also at liberty to strip your clothes off and parade your nakedness in the streets. You are not. You are taken to the police station. The role of the police is to ensure that the law is obeyed.

You do not base your argument on biblical grounds. Why should you? You do not believe in God, or rather you believe in Someone. And this Someone deserves a capital S. Anyway, it is a Bible-free argument we are dealing with. Why should we deal with it? Whatever has no basis should not deserve our attention, even if it is printed in capitals; even if a whole book is devoted to it. Of course it does have a basis of some sort, but that is not enough. Only the Bible – or any other sacred book – is in a position to lay the basis for more detailed talks. So we just condemn your argument and put our detailed talks off until tomorrow. ‘Western governments should be giving more aid to the emerging democracies of the Third World,’ you say. The Bible is silent on this subject.

This thought acquires an actuality that other thoughts do not. This actuality destroys a civilisation; that thought rests on its laurels in a book. It is a beautiful thought and it would not lead to destruction, if it acquired an actuality. It would make the world more beautiful, more prosperous. Anyway, the book where you can find it is very beautiful and deserves your full attention. So you read the book and regret that the thought in question does not cross from fiction into reality. But you cannot do anything about it: you are not rich enough to set the wheels in motion. And even if you have enough money and energy to set them in motion, you will not be able to direct them. In this case they are sure to go in the wrong direction, towards another destruction. Reality always turns rational beauty into ugliness.

Apparently artificial sweeteners may disrupt the body's ability to regulate blood sugar, causing metabolic changes that can be a precursor to diabetes. The same goes for any sweetener, be it physical or psychological. You should add nothing either to your food or to reality. Nothing artificial should mar your enjoyment of hyperrealism. The desserts you consume are unsavoury; so is the reality you come across. It is rude, crude, rough. 'Enough's enough,' you say over and over. 'Not enough's not enough,' you say from time to time. Reality does not suit you so you sweeten the pill. You do not see the reality of reality. And even brief exposure to unreality is very dangerous. Your life begins to take on an unreal, almost nightmarish quality. Thinking about your life gives you nightmares.

Personal survival after death. An illusion of course. There are glorious bodies, inglorious ones. These are not bodies, properly speaking. Even if, in order to achieve your objectives, you speak improperly – fuzzy logic, they call it – you get only approximate bodies that have nothing to do with your present body of which you are so proud. You are proud of it; and yet it is not as vigorous as you think. Actually it appears rather weak in the light of what your doctors say to you whenever you go and visit them. But it is your body all the same. You are not likely to have another body either in your lifetime or even beyond it. Your soul might take refuge from persecution in another body. You will be the remnants of your former body, former life, former form. Just a formality.

You are not disturbed in spirit. Sometimes your body lets you down, but your spirit is as calm as the sea on a windless day. Of course there are a few ships on it. But what are these ships in comparison with a storm? The spirit of an ordinary man is like stormy weather. Hysterics, wrong decisions. But you are a wise man. No passions, no desires. And yet you do not read the Buddha's sermons every day – before dinner, after dinner. You do not read at all. It is true that you do not have enough self-discipline to save money. But money does not count. That is why you never count it. Your self-discipline is spirit-oriented. You visualise the sea with no ships on it. From your picture you also exclude both wind and thunderbolts. You spend a lovely week on the coast.

Revenge is useless. Your child is kidnapped and killed. The police look for the murderer but cannot find him. You take it upon yourself to find and kill him. After a long search, however, you decide to drop your project. Your child will be raised from the dead in due course; so will you. You both will play a lot of games in Paradise, whilst the murderer will roast in Hell. Your life seems to have followed a preordained path. You have sinned a lot. You would find yourself in Hell, but for your child's ordeal; *your* ordeal. You are in the midst of martyrs now. Of course you are not a *Christian* martyr but any martyr is welcome to Paradise. As for your son, he would have become a criminal, but for the kidnapper's timely intervention. Yet he will not go to Paradise.

If you grapple with a problem single-handedly, you will never solve it. Without your fellow creatures you cannot live properly. Two heads are better than one, four hands are better than two. A guru comes and directs your steps towards the right path. You are in the middle of this path; you are on your own now. You no longer move towards your final victory over ignorance. A group of people appear behind you. They begin to push you in the right direction. In most countries, the family unit is still the cornerstone of society. So they push you towards your future wife and children. This strategy could cause more problems than it solves. Your wife could betray you. Your children could be led astray. But you are happy for the moment. And moments count.

Not another day, not another night. Just another state of mind. What is it? What is my mind? These are superfluous questions. Even scientists have no idea what the human mind is and how it works. Perhaps it does not work at all. Perhaps it is my body that works all the time. It goes out, down, up. It does something on the spur of the moment. There are moments and my body responds to them. If I had a sort of mind, I would respond to all these moments by marching off and slamming the door behind me, in front of them. Luckily for me, I have no mind. And my body is so polite it uncomplainingly endures the present moment and also the next one, the next one. It has endured years of torment and abuse at the hands of my neighbours. It does not mind.

A woman was making a speech. You had this sudden impulse to shout out 'Rubbish!' in the middle of it, but you allowed no outlet to your impulse. That impulse of yours got stuck in your throat like a bone. It also got stuck in your stomach – like a bone. All over your insides there was a multitude of bones and you had no idea how to remove them. It was too late to shout anything: the speech was over and you left the empty hall, hoping to join your wife and son in no time at all. But you could not forget your new bones; nor did they forget you, to all *inward* appearances. To all *outward* appearances as well. Whatever you saw in the streets was distorted by the bones. You saw skeletons everywhere. 'Rubbish!' you shouted out. 'Life is a rubbish heap, a charnel house, a cemetery, a heap of relics!'

We were talking at cross-purposes. But I had to talk to somebody. Is that what they say under the circumstances? I had to confide my fear to somebody. Confidence, confinement. Occupational therapy, speech therapy, group therapy. Sometimes even one person represents a group on condition that this person listens to your tales of woe for hours without interrupting the flow of your words, emotions and memories. But the person sitting in front of me did not seem to understand what I was talking about. What was more, this woman would interrupt me and talk in my stead. She was talking about something else. Did she realise we were talking at cross-purposes? Had she understood what I meant, I would have come into the open. I did not. I went on hiding my light under a bushel.

You are an individual; yet you belong to the whole, the One, the One and its Half. There are so many capital letters you can hardly find your way to happiness and eternal bliss. Of course this bliss is just one light – not two lights, whatever some mystics say. They say they can see God's eyes that are like glowing charcoals. God has got two eyes, hasn't He? Of course one can say He is the one-eyed god in the universe of the blind but you should be careful about what you say, especially when you talk about the gods and the blind. You should be theologically and politically correct. So you say, 'He does not see the universe in its entirety, but He knows it is inhabited by those who prefer their ears, noses and palates to their eyes.' The One has only one nose – a consolatory remark.

In every chaos there is a particle of order. You expand this order and get a kind of universal order. You remove 'a kind' and get a universal order where there is no room for chaos. Yet butterflies cannot help flapping their wings, otherwise no one is likely to regard them as butterflies. And they are proud of being butterflies – not only because Nabokov studied them. Their wings are brightly coloured and they flap faster than human arms. So butterflies think they are superior to humans. And superior beings should exist, otherwise life would be inferior to its own ideals; and to Platonic ideas. So butterflies flap their wings and restore an aspect of chaos theory. This aspect makes a real mess of the world. And the world makes a real mess of human life which, in turn, makes a mess of itself.

You minimise your suffering, their suffering. Everyone suffers but you are a minister (and a minimiser); you are in the government. So you minimise the suffering of thousands of people. You are accused of minimising their suffering. You no longer minimise it; you amplify it instead. 'Humanity suffers,' you say. 'Life is cruel,' you add. 'Satan has a demonic gleam in his eye. But don't commit suicide, not yet. A funeral can amplify the feelings of regret and loss for your relatives. You should do your best to *minimise* these feelings. Say you're happy. Show your happiness to your aunts and nieces. Amplify your happiness or rather its outward signs. The sheer amplitude of your happiness should invite comparisons with the Buddha. Smile!' And you grin from ear to ear. On television.

No longer, no longer. Or longer, longer. You add 'no', remove it. You remove 'longer' and only 'no' remains. Or 'shorter'. You are in a narrow street; it is both narrow and wide, long and short. In short, it is long. In long, it is short. Opposites meet; so do words. They meet and part and meet again. All this makes no sense but you enjoy the process for some reason. This reason is better known to yourself. Others have only a vague notion of what you are doing or not doing. Opposites attract, so they meet. Good attracts evil and becomes a fallen angel. You create a pair of opposites and make them meet. Love meets hate; John meets Olga. They fall in love with each other. Are they opposites? They attract – no doubt about it. But are they opposites? Nopposites, noppoites.

No square will ever become a circle unless we pick up a pair of scissors and do whatever is necessary to turn a square into a circle. We are too impatient; we never wait enough to watch natural metamorphoses. We cut, arrange and do not let things follow their paths, becoming what they are. A square may feel it is a circle – in its heart of hearts. Its destiny is circular, in other words. We pick up a pair of scissors and make a triangle out of what. But there are squares that wish to remain squares – come hell or high water. They are not tempted by the joy that many circles experience, on account of their affinities with spheres. Yes, every circle is God-like to some extent. But many squares do not care about the gods; nor do they wish to square the circle. They are fair and honest. That is enough.

According to Leibniz, whatever exists is compatible with most things. This means that whatever we come across is useful, otherwise we would have destroyed this and that a long time ago. The Earth is overpopulated and its space is stuffed with all sorts of objects. For many years we have been cramped for space. If we do not destroy whatever (or whoever) is superfluous, we shall not be able to move and breathe. Maintaining quality is incompatible with increasing output, as they say. And we cherish the high quality of human life. We only buy good-quality wine and throw away the bottles we do not appreciate. The same goes for food and the rest. Many humans are incompatible with our ideas and ideals. We think that man is a paragon of virtue and astuteness. There are no paragons.

You are a theorist. You adore libraries and abhor nature where there are many insects that bite you as soon as you venture outdoors. Of course there are mosquitoes in libraries; there are some in your room. They do not let you sleep until dawn and morn, waking you in the middle of the night; they need your blood. They have not read Spinoza but they also persevere in their beings, for they are beings and have a lot of genes, impulses and inborn instincts. Well, there are even more mosquitoes outdoors. So you stay at home or in libraries, inside them. You theorise about life and economics. But your theories are 'the froth on the surface of deep currents determined by material and technical causes,' as your enemies put it. So what? You like the froth on the top of your coffee.

We are politically unimportant. Of course we regularly gather in the streets to demonstrate against some proposal or other, but only onlookers pay attention to our shouts and placards. 'Send food, not missiles.' Well, the prime minister has just announced that there will be no change in government policy. So they will continue to send missiles, rockets and atom bombs. And we are likely to starve to death. Next month. As I said, we are politically unimportant. We are also aesthetically unimportant. We write masterpieces and paint beautiful pictures. But both museums and publishing houses reject our works. So we marry, make a lot of children and play games with them. We spend our lives in front of computers. Every day we buy software packages. We are commercially important.

The difference of method. This method has not worked so we are trying another. We count upon the difference between our old way of thinking and our new thoughts that are sure to bring about the salvation of humankind. If all humans are saved, we shall be saved too because in the Western democracies there are neither the elect nor reprobates. We have all been elected, to be exact. Our future elections are therefore pointless. Why should we elect a president, a prime minister? We are all presidents, prime ministers and popes. Anyway, this life of ours is of no importance whatsoever. We have found the method and our happiness no longer depends on other methods or any life and birth. We bathe in our fountain of youth and immortality. Just an ordinary swimming pool.

Any today, any tomorrow. If you feel a pain in your stomach, you no longer think in terms of days and nights unless this pain is sharper at night. Then you wait for another day to come – any day, provided there is no pain in it. Yes, you agree to any day, any minute, provided this minute is divorced from your reality. Any reality will do except your own reality that would become unreal, if you had any power over it. Of course it is your thought, your representation. Aren't you in control of your own world? If this wallet is yours, you can open it and spend the money it keeps for you. And if there is no money in it, you had better throw it away. The same goes for your representation of the pain you are feeling. It is your own pain and so it belongs to you. It is your slave. Why not sell it?

You thought this would be over in a minute or two. You were mistaken. The same pain, the same misery. What is eternity? It is something you wish to get rid of. You have never accepted your destiny unconditionally. Even now there are conditions and a few things you wish to get rid of because they constantly put spokes in your wheels. Why can't we *walk* through life? No cars, no flights. Only trees and their shade. And the sun of course. You sunbathe and leave the midday sun for the cool of the shade. You smell a few flowers and fall asleep. Upon awakening you resume your walk through the woods. You wish to get rid of the roots over which you trip all the time. You cannot get rid of them. So you get rid of time.

This was said in the name of X. That was done in the name of Y. Some names deserve our sayings and doings; others do not. We single out the former and talk for hours. What we say is said in the name of the names we singled out a few hours ago. No use talking in the name of other names. We can discard them altogether. There are no such names as A, B, C, D. We talk, stop talking and swing into action. Now we act in the name of Z and O. No matter what we do. But whatever we do should be done in the name of Z and O – whatever they are. Perhaps they are not. Perhaps they are just names. Never mind – you can do a lot in the name of names. So you do this and that. Not for the sake of doing, mind you. But for names, your doings would be nothings. They are names.

You are designated by some property that is peculiar to you. You are in a class of your own, even if you are an ordinary citizen. You are not Citizen Kane; nor are you Citizen Cain. You just have some property or other, but this property is yours and no one will ever dare remove this property from your substance. So you say, 'I'm probably a nonentity, but I've got this property. Can't you see it? Can't you hear it? Whenever I utter a word, this property of mine comes to the fore to such an extent that anyone can hear it. And if I deign to move my index finger, anyone will see it. What else do I need? A passport?' Customarily mystics resort to metaphors when speaking about Jesus Christ. They say, 'The Tree of Life,' 'the only plant with medicinal properties.'

A bell tolling in the distance. It never tolls for anyone. It just enjoys its own sound, which is understandable, given the beauty and purity of this sound. We are supposed to do everything for our neighbours. Sometimes we sacrifice our lives for the sake of their well-being. But we should leave all bells alone. They toll neither for us nor for plants and animals. They toll for the sake of tolling. Why don't we draw a lesson from their way of life? Why don't we live for the sake of living? Why don't we enjoy the very process which is at the root of whatever happens and does not? Isn't it the essence of life? This sound, that movement, this colour, that stone. Do not pick this stone up. It does not exist for the sake of your existence. It lives its own life – in the Stone Age.

You do not see your mind. Perhaps you should not see it. You just give it orders and it executes them. You order it to find a solution to such and such problem. It is happy to comply without any further urging from you. Your mind is more obedient than your body – more transparent, so to speak. And yet you cannot see it, whereas your body is visible and tangible. You touch it round the clock; you see it day in, day out. For all its nakedness, it does not obey your orders. Of course it moves if you order it to move. But if you say to it, 'Be strong and well,' it may disobey you, especially if it is weak and ill. If you say, 'Have sex with this woman,' it may disobey you too, even if it is strong and well. What to do? You are gazing out of the window, rocking rhythmically to and fro.

If you suffer too much, you are likely to ask yourself a lot of questions. For instance, you ask yourself if you are not in Hell. Then you ask yourself if there is such a thing as Hell on Earth. Of course you are aware of the fact that Paradise on Earth exists, if only for those who have heaps of money. Let us not forget that any such heap is part of Paradise or rather a paradise in its own right. You may think that just one such heap would make you happy forever. But even one-tenth of any heap of this kind is out of your reach, to put it mildly. Well, there are other heaps in your life – a heap of torments, for instance. You spent last night in torment, trying to decide what was the best thing to do. And you decided to get out of Hell, out of Earth, out of the universe. So now you are out, out, out.

Whatever one does thrives upon errors. And if one becomes someone else and does something else so as not to repeat the same errors, this new one – let us call this phenomenon '*vita nuova*' – makes some other errors. And this somebody does not always see the error of his or her ways. So he or she repeats the same errors over and over again. Suddenly he or she sees the error of their ways. So they switch to yet another set of errors, for there are no other sets in the world or even outside it. If you cross the border and find yourself in another world – not necessary the *other* world – you are bound to make errors. What does it matter what errors you make! Some of them are big, others small. But even a small error may result in your death, in Eternal Hell.

Some erect a statue; after a while, it is toppled over by others. But there is another group of others; they belong to the 'some'. They erect another statue – to the same king, president or hero. There are heroes who are neither presidents nor kings. There are also kings and presidents who are no heroes. The second statue is now in the middle of the square. It does not look exactly like the first one but nobody minds: everybody knows to whom the statue is dedicated. But there is another group of others who share the views of the other or first others. Once again the statue is toppled. Then once again the party of 'somes' comes to power. Another statue makes its appearance in the middle of the square. Nobody knows to whom it is dedicated. To nobody, no doubt. It is still out there.

This man appears with a deceitful smile but has a dagger behind his back. Then this man turns his back on you and you see the dagger. Not only do you see it – you feel it as well. Inside your chest, inside your heart. Soon, however, you realise that this dagger is a cardboard dagger – nothing to be afraid of. You are not afraid of water pistols, are you? You study the man's smile closely – you have got plenty of time for that – and realise that his smile is sincere and truthful. You switch your lie detector on and it confirms your hypothesis: this smile embodies truth and nothing but the truth. And what if your detector lies? After all, it is a *lie* detector, not a *truth* detector. Nor is it a smile detector, a dagger detector. You are on your own now. You should wear full protective clothing.

You know that your falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases His glory. You know that because you are a churchgoer and your priest's sermons are often centred on St Paul's epistles. 'Should I go on?' You put this question to the priest. You think you should go on because not everyone is aware of God's glory. And the only way to make your neighbours realise how truthful and glorious God has always been is to lie as much as you can. The more you lie the brighter shines God's glory. But you are in two minds whether or not to go on sinning and behaving like an unworthy member of human society. So you ask the priest, 'Should I sacrifice my eternity for His sake? Should I imitate Judas, *his* sacrifice?' 'You ought to imitate Jesus Christ,' says the priest.

And soon you will try to do your best. But not now, not now. You are on holiday this week, next week. You are not doing your worst, far from it. You have done nothing for three weeks. You have neither sinned nor saved your soul from fire, water, self-slaughter. You are not likely to fall in love, not at your age. You are not Goethe, are you? Even if you are, you will not fall in love with another Lolita. 'I think it would be wiser to wait and see how much money you've got left before you make any decisions,' says your *daimonion*. You could seduce your Lolita by offering her perfumes, dresses and cars. You have enough money for perfumes, not for Porsches. So you relinquish your claim to this Lolita, all other Lolitas. In two weeks' time you will do your best to forget her, them, it.

Apparently we are not alone in the universe. There are men and women somewhere else. Of course they are not really men and women. Perhaps they are not real. But they are virtual and so cannot be discarded offhand, however insecure we may feel under the circumstances. They are extraterrestrials and should be treated as such, although we have no idea how to treat these and other creatures who do not live on Earth. Of course we do not always know how to treat our *fellow* creatures. It is true that they live on Earth and may even turn out to be our neighbours. But they have neither our bodies nor our minds. And their souls are not attuned to ours. Perhaps they are extraterrestrials too, for there are many earths on Earth. I live on my earth, in my sky.

Unless you are faced with brutal and vicious circumstances, you will never understand what purity is about. It is about you but for the moment you are a mixed bag of impurities such as evil intentions, wrong considerations and so on. Suddenly you are viciously brutalised by the police. For some time you are routinely brutalised by a few police officers. And also by a number of jailers. Brutality invades your body and soul where there is no room for your own sentiments and ideas. You are as empty as an empty bottle one might take for recycling. They *are* taking you for recycling – both the jailers and police officers. Metal, paper and glass can be recycled; so can you, as a matter of fact. It is a fact: you are recycled, reborn. You are as pure as a recycled bottle; as pure as any pure land.

You do not seem convinced. For once you do not seem anything, which does not mean you hesitate and therefore cannot make up your mind. You just do not seem and even your very existence has been called into question for some time – ever since you became unconvinced. It is better to be a convinced socialist – a convinced anything. You become this anything if you are convinced it is logical and deserves one's full attention. But there are different logics and you have no wish to choose between them. You are not sceptical, whatever your colleagues and friends may think on the subject, on the object. To them you are both an object and a subject. And they think you are deeply sceptical about their ideas. At least you *look* highly sceptical. No. You just do not *seem* convinced.

Three years behind bars seems to have humbled you. You do not look as you used to look: your clothes are cheaper, more modest looking. So are your thoughts and desires. Your thoughts are cheap and humble now. You think about food and seem fairly content with bread and butter or even with two slices of bread. No butter, no marmalade. A cup of coffee, two slices of bread. Sometimes three slices. No ham, no tuna fish. What else? Books? Yes, you read from time to time. Mystics mostly. You might believe you are a mystic yourself. Behind bars many individuals become mystics and prophets. 'That which is good and holy in the light of the powers,' says Jacob Boehme, 'that, in the darkness, is anxious and adverse.' In the light of the powers. You recall the prison. Freedom is dark.

If there was no sorrow, joy would not be obvious. The omnipresence of evil is also explained offhandedly. You are supposed to suffer; if you refuse, you will never experience either joy or happiness. But I can renounce both happiness and joy for the sake of the absence of suffering. I do not wish to suffer, in other words; and I am prepared to be called a 'gloomy person' for the rest of my life and even till Doomsday. Let them say after my death, 'He was a gloomy person. Whenever we paid him a visit, we sat in gloomy silence. We never spoke in his presence.' I did not need your monologues, let alone our chitchat. I needed the absence of suffering. I still need it because I am not dead. And every time I think I shall never suffer I am filled with joy.

His illness put him out of action for seven weeks. Usually his actions make him seriously ill. So he had better decide not to act any more. But he does not seem to know what is better for his health and what is not. Obviously he does not think in terms of health. Actually he does not think at all, for he thinks that actions speak louder than thoughts. This is the only thought he has got within his mind. So he acts and falls ill. He acts without thinking, and he never acts on other people's advice. Other people advise him to stop acting. 'Acting makes you ill,' they say. And they are right for once. 'After all that hard work, you deserve a holiday,' they add. This time they are wrong: he is always taken ill while on holiday. While on holiday, he plays golf every day, trying to improve his game.

Anything can happen. Anything or everything does not always happen to others. Sometimes it is you who get involved in destiny's arrangement. It is not necessarily *your* destiny you get involved with. This might be another human being's destiny or just another destiny, some destiny. Yet you are arrested and find yourself in prison – for a crime you have not committed. You are prevented from taking your customary walk in the woods. Of course they allow you to walk around the courtyard adjacent to your cell. But this courtyard does not look like the woods you like so much – not only because no brook runs through it. In the long run, you realise that your destiny is somehow parallel to the one you are tormented by this year. A parallel destiny, a labyrinthine network of destinies.

How does one go mad? Actually one does not go anywhere, not in *this* case. One does go everywhere before being engulfed by madness. It is as if the lights were switched off. This can happen all of a sudden, one day, out of the blue. Neither nothing nor no one comes; nor does anybody go, anything, it. One stays in the middle of nowhere or rather in the middle of oneself; at the core of oneself. Not in one's heart of hearts, though. One's heart has already been lost. And if you lose heart, you lose yourself. No, it is not as easy as falling off a log. (It is, it is.) Words often lead you up the garden path; or down. They lead and let you down. You listen carefully to words as you go mad, down *that* path. This can happen little by little, step by step. Another step, yet another. Down the path.

Your son is always getting in trouble for misbehaving at school. At home he drops precious objects such as crystal vases – on purpose. He often throws them out of the window, hurting dogs and passers-by. You know he is not naughty: after all, he is your only son. But he should be punished and not rewarded for what he does on a regular basis. 'My father used to thrash me when I was a boy,' he says to his middle-aged colleagues. He also talks to them about mild electric shocks. At some point his father decided to punish him by means of 'Skinner Electricity'. According to Skinner, punishments can have the opposite effect. The boy subjected to the shocks enjoyed them so much he ended up putting his fingers into electric appliances.

Nothing can be proved. You collect evidence to prove that X is X and not Z. This evidence is evident and you believe it. But no amount of evidence is sufficient – you are aware of that. So you try to fill the world up, leaving no room for proofs to the contrary. Your aim is to eliminate all contraries from the world. Alas, there are some dark, distant corners where you may find these proofs, provided you take the trouble to reach these corners on foot and switch on the lights. You do so and see many proofs to the contrary. That is what they call the 'possibility of new, conflicting evidence'. Your universal harmony and unity come to an end. All good things come to an end on account of the possibility of proofs to the contrary. You eliminate all possibilities. The world is impossible now.

Long-term effects are always unclear. You survive your psychological trauma by listening to your doctor or anybody else; or by putting your head on your husband's shoulder. This shoulder is likely to cure you if you love your husband, if he does not betray you too often. All right, you are cured and they call it a 'short-term effect'. You have no idea whether it is short-term or long-term, short-lived or long-lived. You know there is an effect because you do not suffer any longer. At some point that radiation leak had a disastrous effect upon the environment and your body, your psyche. Now you are confronted with another effect and you take it into account. You are cured. What will you do with your body and mind? You will put both on your husband's shoulder, on his breast.

A sheet of white paper. Why isn't it red or blue? This question is wide of the mark; all questions are, as a matter of fact. 'You have to pull out the arrow,' as the Buddha put it. No use trying to find out the identity of your murderer. You will die anyway but before you do, you had better pull out the arrow, otherwise you will not be happy in the Hereafter. You should not throw in the towel, in other words. So, instead of trying to find out why you have this sheet of paper on your writing desk, you pick up your pen and write, 'This is a sheet of paper. Neither it nor I are immortal. I can burn this sheet or throw it away. Someone may shoot me in the head or in the heart. Neither the sheet nor I can do anything about it. But even if we are thrown into a rubbish bin, we should not throw in the towel.'

Everyone says she is a 'demoniac lady'. Not just a femme fatal, according to everyone. No, she is demoniac, demoniac. Why? She goes to church every Sunday. At home she prays before eating and falling asleep. Does she insult her suitors? She has no suitors – not because she is ugly or old, mind you. She just has no suitors. Perhaps everybody is afraid of her. After all, she is a demoniac lady, which means that now and then a demoniacal light enters her eyes. Perhaps. Anyway, nothing really happens – neither in her life nor in ours. There are no demons, no gods. We need these words to say that someone works hard – like a demon. And if you are asked, 'What does Heidegger mean by that?' you can always answer, 'God knows!' Words come in handy. We are just human.

You behave and think like a child. This strips the adult dignity from your existence. Of course no one asks you to stand on your dignity; you have none anyway. People just say you behave and reason like a child. What to do? You cannot modify your behaviour because, in your heart of hearts, you *are* a child. Your whole body is childish, let alone your mind. But you could maintain a dignified silence about this public opinion. Instead, you talk to everybody, saying that childhood is the best period in one's life. As a child you discover the world every day. You are curious and spontaneous. If asked 'Where do you go on holidays?' you answer, 'To islands with clean, unspoilt beaches.' And everyone knows that adults prefer oil slicks.

Your body is made up of various forces which cannot serve any useful purpose unless you come to an agreement. Well, you do come to an agreement and this agreement of yours stipulates that new cars must have seatbelts for the driver and every passenger. Well, well, well. You are protected, aren't you? What else do you need? You need *psychological* protection, odd as it may seem: according to some physicians, only your body rules the waves or rather your blood that goes from one vein to another and curdles when you hear a scream on condition that what you hear is a blood-*curdling* scream and not a blood-*pacifying* one. Well, you hear the latter scream. Your blood is pacified, but you are not. Once more you are trying to patch together a treaty on defence.

I keep my petrol receipts because petrol is one of the expenses I can offset against tax. Daily routine. I earn money and pay taxes. I ask myself what I earn before/after tax. I earn what I earn and spend what I spend. The hardest part of human existence still lies ahead of me as I wake up once again and try to figure out what went wrong many, many years ago. All this happened neither yesterday nor the day before. I wish I could live another life but, for some reason, I am living this life. I might have repressed something, somewhere; or oppressed someone. The poor and the oppressed often avenge themselves on their oppressors. And repressed desires avenge themselves on their repressors. I am depressed, repressed, oppressed – by taxes, among other things.

How would I rate my life on a scale of 1 to 5? 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. In the beginning was the word – the birth, rather. I was blissfully ignorant of death, fame, famine, femmes fatales. You are not always directly involved in whatever happens. Sometimes it happens in a distant country. You hear someone say, 'There are reports of refugees dying of famine.' You are not dying of famine but you are regularly filled with remorse after eating a huge, sumptuous meal washed down with a bottle of La Fleur. This remorse reduces your life to 3. My remorse-free childhood. I ate a lot of caviar without giving a thought to those who were starving to death in distant countries; or in my own country, in the Soviet Union. Compassion and remorse. Degeneration of the heart muscles. 3, 2, 1, 0.

To some extent life is a logical construction. You are born and grow up. For all your efforts, you do not go back to your mother's womb: that would be illogical. Some children know more than adults and are more intelligent than them – Jesus, for instance. Let us recall the lecture He gave to the scholars in His infancy. But this is not illogical, considering that He is the Messiah and our Saviour: we cannot be saved by an ignoramus or a stupid jerk. So it is not illogical; it is miraculous and supernatural. One needs the ability to construct a logical argument. With the help of God, one can do it. But life does not have to follow this argument: it has other arguments, constructions and deconstructions. According to some theologians, God can undo the past. Life undoes the future. Logical, isn't it?

She was buried in the family vault. What does that mean? It means that she lived, died and was buried by members of her family. At least she used to have a family, otherwise she would not have been buried in the *family* vault. Of course you may ask to be buried in your beloved's family vault, but her relatives are bound to grow indignant: your corpse would take up too much room, leaving no room for your beloved's brothers, cousins and uncles. Anyway, we are talking about a woman. She was born. Was she? Did she live for a while or was she *stillborn*? Even a stillborn child is entitled to some space inside her family vault. After all, it was not her fault she was not hale and healthy upon leaving her mother's womb. So she was a stillborn child and nonetheless was buried in the family vault.

St Paul was not the only man who talked about the wrath of God. He was a man because he was neither the son of God nor even His nephew, and whenever he speaks of the wrath of God, we are entitled to take it with a pinch of salt, saying, 'It's all hearsay.' What kind of hearsay? St Paul says God told him to do this and that, to say this and that. So this hearsay is related to God. Is it? We only have his word for it. And once again we take it with a pinch of salt. We do not believe him because our God is benevolent, forgiving and kind. Even if we sin, he appropriates our sins and redeems them. Why talk about His wrath? He will end up suing us for slander. Last night you pricked your finger. The wrath of God. Last week you caught a cold. The wrath of God.

St Paul thinks that what may be known about God is plain to us, to human beings in general. Why? Because God has made it plain to us, to them and also to animals and extraterrestrials. Why is it plain, crystal-clear? Because the universe is beautiful, logical and harmonious? All right, we struggle for life; everyone and everything does. Plants have their seeds conveyed to another country because only there will they be able to take root and grow. Only God could conceive such an ingenious way of survival and realisation: we are too stupid for that. We usually destroy flora and fauna. Depredation of the environment is destroying hundreds of species each year. Mountain gorillas, for example, are an endangered species. And what about dinosaurs? Why did *they* become extinct?

According to St Paul, we should rejoice in our sufferings, for suffering produces perseverance. All right, you are impatient but at least you do not suffer. So you rejoice. You have no character, for only perseverance produces it. Well, it is not in your character to have a character. What do you care? You are not in pain – that is what counts. Character produces hope. Spinoza does not seem to advocate it, if I am not mistaken. Anyway, you neither look nor feel wretched. So you need neither hope nor castles in the air. You already have four castles on Earth. Of course you may hope you will always have your castles, servants and bank accounts. And also your vigour. Do you really need this variety of hope? You need clean rivers and lakes where you can swim without risk to your health.

‘Jesus,’ said the priest, ‘saved and redeemed mankind by taking our sins upon himself.’ St Paul said something along the same lines. He said that Christ died for us while we were still sinners. Are we no longer sinners? We commit murders and sleep with our neighbours’ wives. What about these sins of ours? They outweigh all former, pre-Christian sins, for they are committed on a larger scale. We have seen a tremendous lot of technological changes in our lifetime. They allow us to kill millions of people. There have been monumental social and demographic changes on Earth. They enable us to sleep with more wives and daughters than ever. We are still sinners but no one dies for us. No one lives for us either.

‘I am a sinner, I am a sinner.’ You say that to yourself and others. You hope that your sins will be forgiven if you recognise the fact. You know for a fact that you have sinned a lot and you think that if you do not deny this fact, you will be forgiven on account of your repentance. But you do not *repent*; you just *repeat*, ‘I am a sinner, I am a sinner.’ And your fists beat your chest. And you pummel two pillows with your fists. Yet you know they are not to blame for your sins, past and future. You put your raincoat on, go out, find a man and threaten to beat him to jelly if he does not take your sins upon himself. ‘Look over there – there’s a rainbow!’ says the man, whereupon you realise that your sins have been forgiven and forgotten. And you are just forgotten.

Three friends are injured in a road accident; they are in a coma now. They have little chance of recovery. Actually they have no chance of recovery, but you cannot bring yourself to admit that no chance whatsoever will ever allow them to recover and dine with you in your favourite restaurant. So you say ‘little’, whenever doctors say ‘no’. Can you apply to these friends of yours such vague criteria as ‘persons’ and ‘worthwhile lives’? In the first place, you should decide whether they are alive or not. Of course you say, ‘They’re alive. What’s more, they’ll live forever.’ But are their lives worthwhile lives? For a while, you repeat the word ‘worthwhile’. You remove ‘while’ and repeat ‘worth’. Yes, yes. Life is a long climb to the top of the hill, but it is worth it for the view from the top.

What about your brain activity? What about it? Why do you use the word ‘activity’? Do you think that only go-getters deserve to win the struggle for life? Whenever I play with matches, my brain does not work. I have been playing with matches for thirteen months. My aim is to forget my brain activity. Does that mean I opt for death? No, it is nirvana I am aiming for. I know that the boundaries between ‘life’ and ‘death’ are increasingly difficult to determine. St Paul says we should count ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. I have no idea to whom I am dead and to what I am alive. But why should I determine anything? I am playing with coins now. I shall toss a coin to see whether I am alive or not. I am dead. Let me toss another coin.

Who has the right to decide? The Almighty. Who else? The other members of the Holy Trinity. Who else? Judges. Who else? Doctors. Who else? Police officers. Who else? What else? This fog. There is a high risk of another accident happening in this fog. What else? He had a strange bug that caused chest pains and general tiredness. He died last week. What else? Who else? The woman you love. You say to her, 'I don't mind which one we have – you decide.' And she comes to a decision. Who else? What else? Destiny. It decides you should retire to the country. You have no alternative but to retire to the country. It decides you should drink a cup of tea on the terrace of your country house. You are on this terrace, drinking tea with milk. All you can hear is the drip of the rain from the roof.

You are suspended in mid-air. Perhaps you are not but that is what you feel; and your feelings count even more than your thoughts. You say to yourself, 'I'm lying in my bed so I can't be suspended anywhere.' Your feelings disagree with this thought of yours – and many other thoughts, be they yours or someone else's. You feel nervous and insecure. Of course we all have our fears and insecurities, but your feeling of insecurity is in a class of its own. You feel like a child who demonstrates the insecurity of an adult. In your childhood you often danced on a tightrope – in your dreams, in your dreams. You are not dreaming now. You are in your bed and you are suspended in mid-air. There is no tightrope you can rely upon. And if there is one, no one holds it.

You are doomed to failure, to woe. From the very start. But you can no longer speak of any start: all starts took place a long time ago. Now you are confronted with the effects of those starts, with their consequences. Some of them have come to their ends or other ends. No point in talking about them now. Out of sight, out of mind. You are not out of your mind yet; nor are you out of sight. These persons see you and do whatever they can to prevent you from enjoying your life. And if you remonstrate with them about your misfortunes, they say, 'Nothing doing – you were doomed to failure from the very start.' You get the feeling you are talking to angels. Your feeling is right for once. Whose envoys are they? Why are they dancing? Outbreak of fear.

Marx says that we fight for our interests and for those of others, for we belong to a class and are supposed to fight for the interests of that class. The prime minister claims that he wants to create a classless society, and we trust our prime minister. We also trust and like his secretaries who are sure to do the job. They must have done it already so we are living in a classless society. One wonders why we continue to fight the interests of our class or whatever it is. Let us call it a 'group'. Why should we fight for its interests? We are not Marxists, are we? Marxists always fight – sometimes to the bitter end, sometimes to the sweet middle. Well, even if we do belong to some class or other, we are not products of that class's ideology. We are products of many hours spent in the gym.

Wittgenstein thinks that thinking cannot function without any kind of language. A cat is miaowing pitifully outside the door. That is a kind of language, isn't it? But is this cat conscious? Conscious of what? Of being locked out? Yes, otherwise he would not be miaowing so *pitifully*. He would not miaow at all. He would chase his tail or butterflies. Being locked out. What do *we* do under the circumstances? We break down the door if we are sure we shall not be arrested for breaking and entering. What do we do if we are afraid of the police? We plead for forgiveness and mercy. 'Please, let me in! Please, please, please!' Our thinking has been set in motion. 'What if she doesn't open the door? Where shall I spend the night? In a night club? In a ditch?'

'I didn't do it on purpose – it was an accident,' says a 13-year-old boy. What *did* he do? It does not matter, thinks his mother. What counts is his purpose or its absence. Did he do it accidentally? In this case, his father will smack his bottom 10 times. Did he do it accidentally on purpose? To attract attention to his ego? In this case, his father will smack his bottom 20 times. Did he do it on purpose? To upset his parents? In this case, his father will flog him viciously. He will whip him into shape, instilling a set of family values. 'You should love your parents. You should on no account upset your parents.' That is what the father means by 'shape'. If you say to him, 'I'm opposed to war in any shape or form,' he will answer, 'Shape.' And he might add after a while, 'Form.'

You still have the sucking reflex as if you were a newborn child. You sucked your thumb until you were thirteen. Then you stopped for a while because you decided to be an adult. You wished to marry and have a lot of children. And those who have a lot of children do not usually suck their thumbs. And if they do, the whole family gathers in front of the television set and its members suck their thumbs to their thumbs' content. 'A kind of ritual, you know,' they say to friends and foreign visitors. 'Babyhood is the best period in anybody's life,' they add nodding their heads, their thumbs moving up and down. And if their visitors give them questioning looks, they explain their ritual thus, 'We're developing the use of the mouth. We want to become politicians.'

I am an empty vessel waiting to be filled. Why am I waiting for this fullness? Don't I feel comfortable in my emptiness's company? Of course I do but one is supposed to be filled with love, knowledge and many other things. Well, let us skip knowledge: St Paul is dead set against it. If you learn something, you get in a muddle over this something – and everything. This something questions whatever lies outside it. There is little wonder that you are often found wandering in a confused state of mind. The books you read invariably make you drowsy and confused, but there are times when you are quite lucid. And in such moments you decide to stop reading and listening to the radio. So you have been filled only with love that makes you drowsy and confused.

Are you about to make a claim? Whatever your claim is, however tiny it may be – *klein*, as the Germans put it – prudence and caution are required. These are the keywords you are supposed to recall on the verge of success. Yes, if your claim meets with universal approval, you become rich and immortal. If not, you are now on the verge of collapse/tears/disaster. You do not know on which verge you are now, but it is the key moment of your life and you are quite aware of that. So, instead of throwing caution to the wind, you ask yourself if your claim is backed up. It is essential to have backup when you are about to make a claim – in case anything goes wrong. And even if nothing is likely to go wrong, you had better have backup. Just in case. After all, the world is all that is the case.

What can you describe in everyday terms? Nothing, not even everyday terms. You need mathematical formulas and signs: + and – are mathematical signs. You must have heard about them, if only in relation to your Christmas shopping. But there are other signs of which you know nothing, not even next to nothing. You are nowhere near them. You do not even know what they look like; and yet you studied mathematics at school. Well, you know 'x' and the equation $3x - 3 = 15$, $x = 6$. But this equation does not describe the world. Yet it is closer to the universe and its Absolute Truth than whatever you can *say*, when trying to describe Creation by means of *words*. 'A tale told by an idiot' is the best description of Creation in literature. Yet even $3x - 3 = 15$, $x = 6$ is superior to it.

Greek philosophers often speak about virtues and the soul which, according to them and other gurus, must be taken care of. Instead, we are solely preoccupied with the minutiae of everyday life. Our mind is overloaded with thoughts such as, 'Paintwork on the corner of this stairway tends to get nicked and scratched.' If, in the Hereafter, we happen to encounter Socrates, he might say to us, 'You cared more about the corner of your stairway than about your soul. Did you ever look at it, at its nooks and crannies? They were scratched and nicked. They were unkempt and scruffy. And you kept thinking about everyday reality.' What shall we say to him? 'In our thoughts everyday reality was invested with a sense of wonder.' It is embarrassing to be caught telling a lie.

Do we identify with other people in trouble? The question seems to be wrong or rather wrongly put. It may mean that we are in trouble; we are not. But sometimes we do identify with those who are in trouble, even if we are happy campers for the moment. Yes, we are generous and compassionate. Our hearts ache with pity for her and him – for all sufferers. As this feeling of ours reaches fever pitch we identify with them. Then we do justice to compassion fatigue and realise we are as miserable as the sufferers we took pity on. If someone says, 'I disapprove of suffering,' we nod and frown. Yet we think that one should not disapprove of destiny because one can change neither it nor oneself. If you disapprove of a tree, you can have it cut down. What if you disapprove of mankind?

This is a puzzle because the phenomenon we are speaking of fails to fall into the standard categories of empirical or logical knowledge. So we had better leave this phenomenon alone, otherwise we shall suffer from feelings of inadequacy. And such feelings always hinder human beings in their efforts to conquer the universe. To conquer it, you have to know all the ins and outs of how it works. It does not work, nothing works; nothing can hide from us this fact. So we know this fact but this knowledge of ours is inadequate: it does not enable us to conquer the universe. This is what we call *empirical* knowledge. We see and hear that nothing works. And what about our *logical* knowledge? We know that we cannot conquer the universe.

You stick to a set of compulsory rules. For instance, you neither hate nor kill anybody. Of course you hate almost everybody: the people you see around you are either richer or poorer than you are. If they are richer, you envy them and suffer from feelings of inadequacy; if they are poorer, you feel duty bound to help them either financially or morally. That is what compulsory rules are about. Some individuals are more famous than you are; and more intelligent. But you are not allowed to kill them. So you look at their faces and listen to their interviews. Breakfast television, lunch television, dinner television. *The Lives of Celebrities*. It is one of the few television programmes you always make a point of watching. But you are allowed to switch TV off, aren't you?

You are sure to be dispersed. For the moment you look like a unit and your actions are efficient, logical and harmonious. You retain your form for a while but then you feel you are no longer on top form, in top form. So you have lost a part of your form, of your unit. You are no longer unique, in a class of your own. You are now in a class of *their* own. You follow the crowd because you no longer think for yourself. You think for others, which does not mean you help anybody; nor do you love anybody. You just follow the crowd. Your decomposition is under way. Of course you are growing older and older, but the cause of your decomposition lies elsewhere. It lies in space, not in time. It lies in Paradise, under the Tree of Decomposition, under the Bush of Dispersal.

You hold yourself together; you are not disjointed. You look at yourself in a mirror and say, 'I'm not disjointed.' Neither your image nor your vision is disjointed. The same goes for your thoughts. You do not say, 'I'm not.' You do not add, 'Disjointed.' You do not say 'jointed' either. But somehow your life was put out of joint. When? In your childhood. Everything took place in your childhood. Many joints, many disjoints. There is a disjunction between your mind and your body. Your mind devotes its time to exploring a constellation. You are told one cannot walk on the stars because they are very large balls of burning gas. No shoes would enable you to walk on burning gas. Walking sticks are of no use either. So your body cannot follow your mind.

You break yourself, for you think you are too big, too cumbersome. You take up too much room and you have no strength left to maintain order within your substance, within this room. And you hate disorder in any shape or form. You do not like formless things. You are one of them now so you no longer love yourself. And you have no wish to persevere in your being and even in your non-being. Whatever is related to you – even to the tiniest part of your personality – makes you sick. You do not like being sick. Being sick makes you sick. So you are doubly sick, triply sick; sick at heart, sick to your stomach. You drop a bomb on yourself. You are continually being blown to smithereens. But every smithereen of yours is doubly sick. Every single nerve, every single gene, sin.

Some say the woman is fire. Others disagree with some. They say the woman is water. The woman is also air and Earth. Because the Earth is our mother and our mother is a woman. The woman is also ether because she is an ethereal being. And some women are ethereal beauties. They are quite different from bathing beauties, needless to say. What about men? Some men are fire, others water and air. These are both, water and air; they are bubbles. Some men are champagne; others claret or burgundy. Some men are nobodies; others everybody. Shakespeare, for one, was everybody: kings, queens, beggars, Ophelias. The world is fire, champagne, trees, lakes, hells, purgatories, purgatives, Stalinist purges, putsches. Time is the fuel of the world. It adds fuel to the fire.

According to the Upanishads, will is greater than mind. But if will is part of mind – its activity, for instance – then mind is greater than will, for the whole is greater than any of its parts. If will is mind's activity, it can make it smaller. Will often acts without thinking – without mind, so to speak. Mind does not mind, for it is passive. But for will and its continuous action, mind would be inert and even sloppy. Under the influence of Buddhism, will may decide to reduce the size of mind and its influence. Anyway, Buddhism exerts a greater influence over will than mind. The same goes for Hinduism. So will reduces mind to a speck of dust. But both Buddhism and Hinduism abolish will as well. So will reduces itself to a speck of dust too. Dust to dust.

It is abnormal to have spots at your age. Of course you are in your second childhood but that does not mean you should have spots all over your face. Acne is the curse of adolescence and you are not in your second adolescence. An adolescent knows *something* about the world. You discover everything as if you were born yesterday or the day before. You even ask if death will ever come. 'He has always come in the past. But what about the future? Are you certain he will *always* come? Are there no exceptions to this rule? Is it a rule? What do we know about the origins of death? We were born so we'll die. That's how you reason. And what about immortals? If the idea of immortality is part of our brains, immortality exists.' You are on your deathbed, en route from abnormality to normality.

It takes energy to keep your hidden thoughts inside their hiding place. First your unconscious has to find a suitable hiding place and unconsciously you waste a lot of energy. Selfishly your unconscious hides your hidden thoughts at the bottom of itself where they lounge until the Doomsday when your unconscious decides to interfere in your life. In your *conscious* life. You scream all of a sudden and everybody hears your scream. You are reminded of horrible occurrences; you repress them once again – consciously, this time. Your repression is enforced by terror; your memories are terror-stricken. They decide to lie low and there is nothing lower than the bottom of their hideout. But they will rise from this bottom on Judgment Day. Or any other D-Day. Or J-Day.

People have their individual values. Of course they know *universal* values and virtues. They had better know them by heart, otherwise they might be arrested and left to rot in jail for most of their lives. But they walk or moon around, and they are even allowed to speak of their own values and yardsticks by which they hope to measure everything and everybody. They measure whatever can be measured and nothing comes of it, of them – of their yardsticks. In a way, we are each other's sons, daughters, parents, uncles, aunts and nephews. Our room is our country where we live, eat, swim, sunbathe, play cards and football, write books, sell books and listen to pop stars. Our room is swarming with our sons, daughters and cousins. There are no individuals – only universals.

It was going. It is better to think it was it, not he, she or love. Love is not it; it is either he or she. It is neither 'or' nor 'and'. Not every word becomes what is usually called a 'dark object of desire'. You love words and say something from time to time. And then you lapse into silence or nonsense. What they call 'word' or 'logos' is not God; nor is it His son. Nor the Holy Spirit, nor the Unholy Spirit. Logos is a gesture, a glance. Let your ignorance speak for once, untrammelled by education, authority and rules. Logos is a semi-thought, semi-sentiment, semi-action, semi-non-action. I am completely stumped – that is the image of logos. A log is an image of logos – not a tree. The beginning. In the beginning. Going.

To look at oneself from the outside. First one has to find this outside, which is no easy task, given that everything is one. Everything is one's projections and one cannot get rid of them, even if one shuts one's eyes, ears and nostrils; even if one shuts oneself. Of course one can walk and walk; further and further. One should not say to oneself, 'I can go no further.' It is perhaps in the further that one can look at one's thoughts and understand their nature. If you do not know what your thoughts are made of, you will never think appropriately. Suppose one is going bald. One does not know it because one needs two mirrors to find out what is going on on top of one's head. The same goes for one's self-knowledge, streams of consciousness, trains of thought, planes of thought.

You see three separate objects in front of you and describe them as being 'three'. You do not think in terms of these objects. You are so engrossed in figures you neither hear nor see anything, or anybody.

You multiply 7 by 15 and get 105. You also deduct something from something. If you venture outdoors, you think only in terms of tax-deductible expenses. You make sure you are given a receipt for everything you buy. Of course you know *what* you buy, but you do not even attempt to find out *what* is hidden at the core of the things you buy and enjoy. To some extent they are also living creatures, for they were born and will die sooner or later. They have molecules that move and collide. They collide with your molecules. You enjoy them and put their receipts away.

You have expectations – great or small, as the case may be. The financial performance of your business is fully expected to improve. That is what you say to yourself day and night. You lay particular stress on the words ‘expected’ and ‘fully’. You do not need to stress the word ‘business’: it is always at the core of your mind – and under a lot of stress. You had better not read Dickens’ *Great Expectations*; if you do, you are sure to suffer from low morale. And low morale is not consistent with *genuine* great expectations. Your expectations are great, aren’t they? Why should you waste your time on *small* expectations? What makes you think you will triumph over appalling adversity? Inductive method. So far your achievements have been nothing short of miraculous.

Aristotle thought that animals often mimic what human beings do. You wake up; so does your dog. It is true that he does not wake up at the same moment; he wakes up later. It does not matter. What matters is the fact that he is bound to wake up, provided he is not dead. You are alive so he is alive too, for he is bound to mimic whatever you do. This time there is no discrepancy between his behaviour and yours: your timings coincide. You are alive today; the same goes for him. In this domain, he also mimicked you yesterday. Anyway, he seems to have gained momentum for a long adventurous life. This morning you called in at the baker’s and bought a loaf of bread and a croissant. Your dog kept you company. Your coffee is incredibly smooth and rich; yet your dog does not like it.

Today one is constrained to judge the world in terms of business. Whenever you speak of today’s world you are supposed to use the word ‘business’ as often as possible, otherwise you risk losing your reputation. Never mind – you can still drive your point home. For instance, you can say, ‘A business as poorly managed as that one does not deserve to succeed.’ And if your listeners ask you to explain why it does not, you can say, ‘A business as poorly managed as that one does not deserve to be analysed.’ Hegel, Nietzsche and Foucault took notice of their present, of their today and its structure. Their today deserved to succeed and it did succeed to some extent. Our today does not deserve anything, not even our suicide. Indeed our suicide would be part of today.

Our today is independent: it does not belong to any time but the present. Perhaps it also belongs to the future. I do not care: *après moi le déluge*! Perhaps liberation from any obvious reference may be the most effective declaration of independence of all. Perhaps. One thing is certain – we are fully

independent from the past. Even Marx seems to have vanished into thin air; Marx and his ghosts. Incidentally, we are no longer haunted by ghosts of any kind. Our virtual worlds are not ghosts, are they? They are more real than reality. 'Don't you remember that smashing weekend over at Morehead's place? When we went down and saw that fantastic rugby match. Wales v. England. And England just won.' (Our past.) What else? Fashion shows. Strips of patterned dove-grey mink.

We all know that adults often look back on their childhood as a golden age. This does not mean, however, that all of us follow the example of these adults: childhood is not always a happy time. And if you had an unhappy childhood, you do not even regard it as the Iron Age. You may regard it as the Iron Curtain, though. You were forbidden from doing this and that; and many other things. This Iron Curtain always hung between your heart's desire and its realisation. Well, never mind. Let bygones be bygones. Now you are in your second childhood and you must make the most of it, especially if you are an artist. But, if you wish to create a masterpiece, you must not call upon your *first, initial* childhood. The second one has its own vocabulary: no point in, useless, short-lived, marionettes.

Most of reality is not stable but full of disorder and change. What is stable? A few laws such as the ones related to neighbours, enemies and cheeks. You are supposed to love your neighbours, whoever they are. Your love should be stable, although your neighbours are not. Some of them die, others leave forever. Well, you love the children of the former, even if they turn out to be rapists and rippers. You also love the newcomers who settle in the house formerly occupied by your former neighbours. Your new neighbours allow their dog to bite you now and then, but you love them all the same: you are not supposed to do otherwise. So your love is 'in equilibrium' or 'near equilibrium' – if your neighbours are particularly odious. The rest is 'far from equilibrium'.

I wish I could do something about my mind: it is a real mess. Or chaos. I can no longer count on self-organisation because during such periods I do not seem to have any self, however tiny and unreliable. Anyway, in the last two years my self has dwindled to a tenth of its former size; even when I manage to put my mental life in order, my self remains what it is so that it is too fragile to cope with both the outside and inner worlds. In such moments I am under the impression I have to cope not only with the Earth and her inhabitants, but also with the entire universe. And let us not forget that we are not alone in this universe of ours, which means there are many earths in it. The problem of overpopulation. How to cope with it? I shall go and clear up that mess in the kitchen.

But for death, we would always be in a mess. Yes, death shapes us into human beings. But for death, we would be formless. No shape, nor form. Even plants would not endure our presence, let alone animals and insects. We would be a sort of gelatinous mass. Or just a sort, a kind, kind of. Here is a short dialogue between a dog and a cat. 'It was kind of strange to see them again.' 'Did you think they'd been gone

forever?’ ‘I thought so. How can such creatures move on the surface of our Earth?’ ‘Do you think they’re “creatures”?’ Yes, we *are* creatures – thanks to death. As Prigogine puts it, ‘Irreversibility has a constructive role. It makes form. It makes human beings.’ Let us enjoy this prerogative. Alone. Why should we construct animals? And insects?

If the world were destroyed, I would remain intact. Do I have any links with this world? According to Pushkin, Peter the Great opened a window beyond which the whole of Europe was lying. I seldom open my windows and if I do, I welcome fresh air, not Europe, let alone the rest of the world. This is the only way to remain intact or at least be spared some gruesome details which assail any of us when *all* our windows are open. One had better put some wonderful plants in the window instead of staring at the streets and stars. Even a closed window is dangerous, for it is transparent. And transparency is always dangerous. I would rather see darkly, darkly; or not see at all. What would I say if I could see the Taj Mahal out of my window?

The intrusion of causality. You stay alone, in a room, in an empty castle. What is the cause of life? Nothing. There are no causes, only effects. The effect is this castle and in this castle there is a room where you are sitting. Your armchair has no cause. Someone might have made it in the 18th century. A cabinetmaker no doubt. No one made it. What brought you to this palace last month? Time? Space? Did a train bring you to this room? You wished to go on holiday. Is that why you stayed in this room? Your fatigue? Is your birth the cause you are looking for? But for your birth, you would not have come to this room. Are your parents the cause of your bliss? I like to go off on my own, to sit back and bliss out in a darkened ballroom. Without good cause.

I retain a strong attachment to my traditional values/customs/beliefs. I believe in my resurrection and I retain this belief. The maintenance of this belief is not very expensive. Of course I have to go to church from time to time. Well, I take a bus which takes me to my church and priest; to his sermons, in a way. I pay, of course, but this payment does not disrupt my financial system. And the maintenance of my values does not cost me anything. The main value of my house lies in its quiet country location which is quiet and no motorcycles attempt to destroy my peace. In other words, I do not have to give anything to their owners to persuade them to alter their itineraries. According to my lifelong custom, I do not give money to anybody except my charwoman and niece.

Why should I deny my nature? Because I abhor nature as such? There are many natures and I abhor them all, for they speak about death and I do not like their speeches. We know that flies drop dead all the time, although we do not *always* swat them with rolled-up newspapers. So do humans, trees and other objects. You read in a newspaper, ‘The heat was overwhelming and people were dropping like flies.’ So did trees, planes and comets. Of course neither planes nor comets felt our overwhelming heat

but they dropped all the same. Witnesses say there was an explosion and then the plane dropped like a stone to Earth. So did many other planes and comets. I have heard many explosions since I was born. I have seen many meteors and falling stars. Yet I do not deny my nature, my God-like spirit.

The good man is believed to practise chastity, poverty, fasting and self-torture. What about the bad man? He is rich and treats Christmas as just another excuse for gluttony. But he is not a glutton for punishment, certainly not. He sings bawdy songs and goes to brothels every other day. He enjoys life thoroughly and has no intention of destroying either his bad nature or the world that he likes so much. The good man is partly ascetic but holiness is not his final goal. He pursues no goals, in point of fact. He just does not like life and whatever can be found inside it. Women and their charms do not appeal to him; nor do swimming pools and sports cars. And he hates food as much as Kafka's hero who starves to death in a circus. Whether you starve to death or not, life is a circus, reality TV.

My separateness is an illusion. I have my public life and my private life, and as far as possible I try to keep them separate. And I keep my private life separate from the crowd and human beings in general. I have a multitude of private lives and I keep them separate. I like neither mixtures nor cocktails. You suppose I mix with a wide variety of people in my job. You are mistaken. Of course I have my public life but it is not really open to the public. Actually I do not care about public opinion – not in the least, not in the least. It might have turned against me, for all I know. What do I care! And yet I am not alone. I do not like the world: it has bad vibes. It also has bad wives, waves and particles. Alas, I am a particle of this world. And also its vibe and wave. A wave of opposition.

What are the relations of my organism to its environment? Why do I call myself an 'organism'? Is a 'substance' any better? It is better not to call oneself names. They are misleading and often offensive. You are so complex you cannot be defined by one name. They say, 'His ego.' What do they know about his or my egos, alter egos and superegos? They do not even know our underegos. These are my relations to my environment which is not mine, thank God. These relations are mostly unsatisfactory and unsavoury. Alas, no body, no mind can exist out of space. In *outer* space – yes. Not *out* of space, I'm afraid; not out of *any* space, be it outer or inner. Do I adapt my forces to my environment or space? Yes, if this adaptation is the only means of survival. A 50/50 chance of survival.

Your mind shifts from chaos to order, and then back to chaos. You look for a thought and cannot find it. So you think, 'I can't find the thought I need because they're all out of order.' You cling to this thought in order to put your other thoughts in order. Not in *alphabetical* order, mind you. Nor does your mind really need *chronological* order. You should array your thoughts in descending order of importance. At the bottom of your spiritual staircase you will have short-term thoughts such as, 'I'll drink a cup of coffee.' At the top you will put your innermost thoughts and aspirations. For instance, 'I

should achieve immortality.’ This aspiration is chaotic because you have no idea *how* you can achieve immortality. Alas, neither immortality nor eternity is a self-organising system.

Never stop looking at the world. If you stop, if only for a second, you will never feel like looking at it again. Yes, the world is awful but you can get used to its ugliness and terror if you look at it non-stop. You see bombs and ruins, grimaces and clumsiness. Even mythical and mystical paintings are ugly because they reflect either the outside world or whatever happens inside those heads. Any train of thought is ugly; both the train and its thought are ugly and you cannot do anything about it. And even if you are lucky enough to find *some* beauty, it will be eaten by worms before your very eyes. There are so many worms you get the feeling there is nothing else, no one else. People worm themselves into your affections without your ever suspecting they only do it for your money.

We are all part of some interlocking network. The universe is a jigsaw puzzle that has 11,111,111,111,111 interlocking pieces. Not only are you a piece, a part, you are also in the midst of other pieces and parts. You are also this and that. You cannot help calling it ‘multiple sclerosis’. Call it what you wish – you will never get off the hook. There is no difference between a wrongdoer and a rightdoer. Both are interlocked and locked at the same time. They are locked in and out; so are we, whoever we are. We are probably wrong or right or both. Be that as it may, we are waiting for thieves who might get in by smashing the lock off the door. We call these virtual thieves ‘messiahs’. One messiah is not enough. We need one messiah and two thieves.

Would you rip your neighbour open if you were allowed to do so with impunity? What for? To have a look at his intestines? All right. Would you just kill him? No. Because you love him? Because you have no wish to exert yourself by ripping your neighbour into shreds. Anyway, you are not *allowed* to do so: you are controlled, restrained and brainwashed. Traditionally brainwashing sets goals towards which a society’s members are directed. These goals are: equality, fraternity, happiness, a lot of children. The more children you have, the happier you are. If you have no children, you are by definition mortal. And you wish to be immortal, for mortals do not persevere in their own *Seins*. They commit suicide. So you adopt a few children and persevere in your being, in theirs.

You always react, whatever happens, whatever you experience. If you hear ‘A’, you say ‘B’ or ‘C’. If you say ‘C’, they say you have progressive ideas and attitudes. If you say ‘D’, they say you are a political reformer. If you say ‘E’, they say you are a scientist of genius. If you say ‘F’, they say you are a fool, for one is not supposed to stick one’s neck out. You risk being banished to an uninhabited island for a year. Didn’t such a disaster befall a Greek philosopher? He stood head and shoulders above his fellow citizens and they punished him. So say ‘E’ and go no further. If you say ‘Z’, they will not hear you. No

point in saying, 'If you get my meaning, if you get my meaning.' Nor should you say, 'Y' in the hope they will understand you at last. Nor should you say 'X', Mister X.

I already have said everything. I already have said 'E' and 'V' and 'R'. And all these letters are capital letters. Hamlet said something on the subject, didn't he? Polonius says he was killed i'th' Capitol. 'Brutus killed me.' And Hamlet answers, 'It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there.' What I have written so far is as capital as the calf killed by Brutus. Yet I have a few things to add to what I have already said. Perhaps they are not as capital as all that, but we are determined by all sorts of things. And some of these things have to be said, otherwise they would get stuck in the consciousness and the unconscious. Whatever has been said should be regarded as a preface. You outline what you will be doing and then do something instead of talking. Why not do crosswords?

Particles of love are by definition detachable and itinerant. As every Christian knows, love is infinite and so it is made up of an infinite number of particles. These particles are reluctant to leave the body and soul to which they are attached. But they are by nature inclined to be bouncy. So they leave their body and go towards others. We should not forget that they are artistically inclined: they wish to create the feeling of love in another body, another soul. Arousing someone's love is not always an easy job but our particles are eager to rise to the challenge. 'Just try to concentrate on hitting the heart.' Men in love often speak to particles, atoms, genes and nerves. Try as you may, you cannot get rid of other people. You have no alternative but to love them; and hit them with your particles.

What is heavy? What is light? This is light in comparison with a heavy object. But this heavy object is not the heaviest object in the world. So it is light in comparison with the heaviest object which must be the universe itself. It is an object in its own right, and it is very heavy, judging from what we carry on Earth. Man is a beast of burden; so are donkeys and oxen, as everyone knows. But not everyone knows that man is *also* a beast of burden. Mankind struggles under its heavy burden. That is what they call the 'struggle for life'. And what about burdens of responsibility? Donkeys do not suffer from *them*. These burdens are even heavier than a dozen sacks of potatoes. They are even heavier than the Earth that Archimedes would have raised, had he owned an appropriate car jack.

If you are ill, you have a different outlook. You judge the world differently, in terms of your pain. According to you, the world is ill and you do not say to yourself it is ill because *you* are. You are here and the world is there. But whatever is there is ill – that is what you think as you project your illness onto others. You say, for instance, that so-called mass culture is the product of industrialism. And even if your body is not ill, you may say that because your mind is affected by bugs of all sorts. So you say that works of art are now produced with the deliberate aim of making money. And if a few more bugs

put down roots in your brain, you say that a new wage-earning proletariat is thus distracted from everyday life. Yet another bug and you begin to burn books.

There are only mixtures around us, and often we wonder where there is such and such a thing. What we need is not a mixture but a thing, the thing. What thing? We are trying to find out what we need as we take a good look at a mixture. Sometimes we take one look at such and such a cocktail and burst out laughing. We do not take it seriously. But one look is not enough so we take a second look, a very good look at the cocktail. Its parts are mixed with air and water, with earth and fire. How to single out what we really need? How to *define* what we need? No definitions this time: our hasty conclusions always lead us astray. This time we shall go straight to the point. But where is the point? It is mixed with other points, with the points of no importance. Mixed marriages of points.

We are in the middle of it. In the middle of what? Of everything. We are in the middle of the night – figuratively speaking. We are right in the middle of the day. We are under the impression that we are in the middle of the night. And our feelings confirm our impressions. For once, they are on the same wavelength. There are so many wavelengths that we get lost whenever we try to find the wavelength – the one we can trust and rely upon. But for this proverbial wavelength, we shall never understand humanity, time and other components of our existence. Actually we are not in the middle of everywhere. We are not in the middle of the forest where princesses usually sleep as they wait for their princes. We wish we could sleep in that forest. We wish we could sleep. In the middle.

St Paul says we should offer parts of our body to God – as instruments of righteousness, he adds. Does God need our instruments? He has got all instruments and all of them are righteous. What can we offer God? Only our sins. Every part of us is sinful so whatever we offer to God is imbued with sin. Actually we need some sort of coating to prevent sins and other pernicious things from permeating into our body. St Paul assures us that sin will never be our master. We are thankful to him for this promise. But what about the coating we need so badly? Now and then the Bible offers its readers practical advice on how to construct the Ark of the Covenant or Noah's ark. What about our sins, our protection against them? We need a lot of weapons for self-protection.

St Paul says that sin was in the world *before* the law was given. So we sinned without knowing anything about our sins. No law said to us, 'This is a sin. You should not sin.' We knew neither the law nor our sins. We did not know we were not supposed to despoil our neighbours' apple trees. We did not even know there was such a thing as the Tree of Knowledge; nor did we know anything about forbidden fruit. Anyway, the trees we used to despoil had nothing to do with knowledge. It is the taste of their fruit that appealed to us. While we were at it, we took no notice of the fact that the trees we were despoiling

belonged to our neighbours. There were no laws and we did not know we had to love our neighbours instead of robbing them. Sin was in the world before our births.

The law of the Spirit of life is diametrically opposed to that of sin and death. The latter says, 'You should sin and die. You are duty bound to sin and die.' The former talks about the community spirit, the competitive spirit and the entrepreneurial spirit. They all are parts of life and so have nothing to do with sin and death. Of course death is part of life, but not within the Christian doctrine which never speaks of death except in connection with resurrection. The problems of sin, life and death are all interconnected. Resurrection sets you free from sin and life. You should die in your lifetime to murder life and sin. If you do not murder them on the spot, you will lose resurrection. It's swings and roundabouts. Life is a roundabout – a series of vicious circles. Resurrection is a swing.

You should no longer conform to the pattern of this world. And what if you have no idea what this pattern is about? You can find out the truth only by experiment. First you must buy some equipment: you cannot probe into the secrets of life with your bare hands. Once you have a number of machines, you can begin to work. But do not forget to try out the equipment before setting up the experiment. Of course you cannot expect to get everything you need at the push of a button. You need to know the pattern of this world. Don't you know there are lots of patterns in this world of ours? You are not supposed to conform to any of them, otherwise you will go to Hell. Well, just hate what is evil and cling to what is good. But if good is a pattern of this world, you should not conform to it.

You pick up an object and realise it has you in its power. Of course it is unconscious and cannot move on its own. But it does not need to move to demonstrate its power. You pick up the receiver and dial his or her number. No one answers the phone, which means that neither he nor she is at home. This may also mean they do not wish to speak to you or anyone. No point in trying to reach them on their mobile phones: they will not answer. So nothing has happened; yet both the phones and these people have you in their power. Everything and everybody are powers in disguise. Sometimes they are naked powers and you must take them into consideration. Not just *them* – their powers. If you do not, you will be flattened by a single punch to the head. (Homage to Foucault.)

Can you read that sign from this distance? You can but you do nothing of the sort. You know that distances distort almost everything: the sun, human faces. You think the sun is small but if you fly towards it, you will realise it is much bigger than the Earth. And if you attempt to read the sign you can see in the distance, you are bound to misunderstand it. Instead of the letter T, you will see the letter I. Besides, your linear thinking habits are likely to influence the way you decipher the sign. You know that the letter S is the longest letter in the English dictionary. And you are not keen on whatever is long.

You prefer shortness and sweetness. So you exclude this letter from the sign. You also exclude X from it: X reminds you of mathematical formulas and your school. And your unbearable teachers.

If you are strong, you ought to bear with the failings of the weak. If you are weak, you ought to bear with the triumphs of the strong, even if these triumphs humiliate you beyond measure. Never mind the measure beyond which you are humiliated: there are other measures in the world. Of course you, and your brothers and sisters, have no reliable measure of the damage done to your reputation. Never mind: there are other measures in the world. And do not forget the measure-for-measure principle. The strong heap scorn on you. What is your measure? You heap your failings on them. In the long run they are bound to feel remorse for their neglect of your inability to cope with the world and its problems. They give you a sports car and a hugely expensive diamond ring thrown in for good measure.

Whatever you do, suffering is sure to follow. Whatever you do not do, suffering will follow too. You say, 'Whatever.' Whatever you say or think, you express your suffering. And then you say, 'I'm afraid I'm not expressing myself very clearly.' And you let out a scream. Is that clear now? You say, 'I suffer terribly in the winter when it's cold and my joints get stiff.' You are about to go into details, but your neighbour cuts in, 'What are you talking about? Today is a perfect summer's day. By the way, last summer my wife and I went to Australia, and two summers ago –' At this point you let out a scream instead of saying your joints have been stiff for many years – ever since your birth. You scream yourself hoarse, stop and whisper after a while, 'On a wing and a prayer.'

You believe in conflict and this faith stems from the struggle for life you have engaged in since your birth. First you struggled for your mother's milk. You had a twin sister. Usually brothers and sisters end up having an incestuous relationship, but this time they slugged it out, rather than making love and functioning as a happy pair. For a while you focused your social activity on milk and honey; you still want a lot of honey for your breakfast. Later you got involved with human and animal rights. You kept struggling for the life of others until you grew weary of everything and everybody. Now you are struggling for life with yourself, with your bad habits and evil desires. Two days ago you were given a magic charm to ward off evil spirits.

Is personal survival after death an illusion? How am I to survive? In what shape or form? The Hereafter does not include metempsychosis. Does it include everything? Or exclude everybody? 'If no one asks of me, I know,' said St Augustine. No one questions me on the subject; yet I know nothing. If I become impersonal, I shall not become. If there is no personal survival, I shall lose my I, my me and even my Thou. I shall lose all mes and mys. I shall lose my love, if any. And friendships, and music. I shall no longer have my music. No longer, no longer, no longer. How often do I say this, this, that? Longer,

longer, longer. Another 30 years. After that I shall do my best to put up with impersonality, imperturbability, implausibility, completeness.

If, from your point of view, the real is unreal, one may think that either your point of view is unreal or you yourself do not exist. However, your point of view does exist, otherwise one would not say anything on the subject. One is real, otherwise one would not be one. If, on the other hand, you affirm that the unreal is real, then you are a wise man or woman. Every day you and your affirmations dispense wisdom on a variety of subjects. Some of these subjects are real; others are not. All of them are unreal. Only one subject is real, one human being: your mother. The rest is not even silence; it is non-existence. You are getting closer and closer to your mother's grave. One day you will start digging for her body. You will dig a little hole in the ground.

And if you carry this from here to there, you will become immortal. You will no longer know suffering and death. You die every day and this is most unpleasant. God knows what you feel and how you feel it. You will no longer feel. All you have to do is carry this from here to the nearest wall. And then to the nearest wall. And then to the nearest wall. That is your salvation. You know now how to breathe so you breathe at last. Up to now you have been ignorant of real breathing. Your breath was unreal; you were unreal. Now you are fully real. You can touch yourself; you can feel yourself from the inside, from the outside. There are no longer outsides and insides. Everything is inside you; so is everybody. Touch others. Touch and caress them inside your body. Do not curse them.

It is terribly smoky in here, in the world. You should go out for a breath of fresh air. You are short of breath; outdoors, outworld, you will be *long* of breath. Look at your breath and admire its length. There is nothing longer than your breath. Even the Milky Way is shorter than your breath. What is more (and longer), your breath is *real* now. It used to be unreal, untouchable. Now you can touch it with your fingers and soul. You can also touch your soul and admire its softness. It is as soft as a soft pillow. It is as soft as a soft mattress. It is as soft as soft cheese. It is as soft as chocolates with soft centres. It is as soft as soft tissues, such as flesh. It allows God-rays through. So God-rays go through your soul and body. Your intestines are illuminated with strings of coloured lights.

Antibodies from the mother's milk line the baby's intestines and prevent infection. You are this baby. You are in your second babyhood, in your third babyhood. Your mother is no longer alive. Never mind, never mind. God *is* alive because He is immortal and eternal. And He has got an infinite quantity of milk. God's milk protects you against the cold. It also protects your skin from the harmful effects of the sun. Needless to say, God protects your rights and financial interests. God's milk is far better than vitamin C and so it protects you efficaciously against cancer. You should drink God's milk day in, day

out. This is the milk of Paradise, you know. This is the milk of blessedness and happiness. This is the milk of life. This is the milk of knowledge.

Your self is part of God. If it is not, it is not self. Neither is it your self nor any other's self. You do not know whose self it is; nor do I. Why should we keep this self? Let us throw it away. Why should we be loaded down with superfluous selves? They are superfluous, aren't they? So we throw them away. We take all these selves to the rubbish dump. It is a shame that such a beautiful area has been defiled by a rubbish dump. Unfortunately this rubbish dump is necessary: but for this rubbish dump, we would have to drag all these selves behind us. We need only our own self. Here it is. Look how it shines! Hear how it whines! This is our real self. There is nothing more real than this self. Of course it is far more real than any unself; or any elf.

Does our self need a body? Is it attached to any body? Is it part of any body, however tiny and insignificant? Suppose it is. Whenever this body eats, this self eats as well. Whenever this body sleeps, this self snores. Suppose the body goes blind; so does the self. Suppose the body goes deaf in its left ear; so does the self. Now it is partially deaf and so cannot hear the voice of God. Why? Because the voice of God comes to you and others only through left ears. Right ears hear only human voices and those of animals. All right, we can hear a lot of human voices. But what do they say? 'Our firm does a lot of business with overseas customers.' Do we really need this piece of information? We do not. What does God say? He says, 'Look at me! Listen to me! Be my son and daughter!'

Do you wish to be immortal? Do you wish to grow fearless? For the moment you are both mortal and fearful. You hesitate before rising from your bed. You hesitate before going outdoors, fearful of what you may encounter in the streets. You are fearful and awful. Your body must have been decomposing for several weeks. The same goes for your soul. Why are you so ugly, so corpse-like? Because you have got rid of your desires and passions? And emotions? What about a nice meal? In a nice restaurant? You need to fortify yourself. With what? With a drink and a sandwich? No, no, no way! If you eat three good meals a day, you are less likely to snack on biscuits and crisps. And if you eat four good meals a day, you will *touch* neither crisps nor biscuits. To a brothel! At once!

I see no good in this. I see no good in that either. It is better to shut your eyes forever if you cannot see any good – or god – anywhere. Shut your eyes and open your inner eyes. Can you see gods and goods? You can? All right. Open another pair of inner eyes. What can you see? Your salvation? Paradise? All right. Now open your inner ears. What can you hear? An aeolian harp? What else? No Mozart, please: you have heard enough of his music on Earth, with your outer organs. Now you can listen to your own music which coincides with that of angels and gods and whatnots. Do you see any good in this? Of

course you do. Of course you can. You can see and hear *everything*. But you need neither everything nor everybody. You need only one note, one star in the east.

Do you wish to become immortal? You have no other wishes. That is why you repeat all day long, ‘I wish to become immortal, I wish to become immortal.’ And when you grow tired, you shorten your statement and say, ‘I wish to be immortal, I wish to be immortal.’ And if your colleagues and friends do not understand you, you say, ‘I don’t wish to die,’ which means that you also have a number of no-wishes. You do not wish to fall ill; you do not wish to suffer. You do not wish to forget everything and everybody. Well, sometimes you do, sometimes you do not. It depends on your moods. But you do not like Alzheimer’s – that is for sure. Anyway, you wish to become immortal. All you have to do is fall asleep. If you do not dream, your self becomes composed, serene and immortal.

The past is a source of remorse and the future is somehow linked to your hopes which are as unreliable as your worst friends of whom you will never rid yourself, whatever you do and wherever you go. So you do not go anywhere and your worst friends visit you and you pay them for their kindness, for their wish to relieve your boredom, your burden of monotony and all the psychological pains you have suffered from ever since you withdrew from the world, from the stars and firmaments: you no longer look out of your windows. You serve them tea – with the small talk that you feel duty bound to trot out whenever your worst enemies are around. You enjoy every moment of it and say so to your friends who do not bother to find out whether you are telling the truth or serving up a pack of lies.

Today you are entirely on your own: neither your friends nor enemies take the trouble to walk into your house and pace up and down your room, resolved to take care of your burdens by putting them on their own backs and even into their unconscious. So you are burdened, bored to death and eager to unburden yourself, for this seems to be the only solution to the problem created by your life-burdened body that you go on dragging behind and also before you. This body of yours is in the habit of guiding you as if it was a spiritual thing on which you could always count, given that spiritual things and domains are closer to Paradise than any other things, domains, kingdoms and republics – especially if there are too many left-wing intellectuals in those republics.

The eye is for seeing, the nose for smelling. And what if there is nothing to see? Nothing to smell? What if you can smell only putrefying flesh? Is it worth your while smelling it? And what about your sight? What can you see? Bodies, bodies, bodies. They have putrefied beyond recognition so you cannot recognise them. To tell the truth, you do not *wish* to recognise them. You recognise their putrefactions. That is enough, quite enough. Everything is in the plural now. If there is one body, there are many of them. If there is one putrefaction, the whole world is putrefied. The same does not go for purification.

If there is one purification, there is none. You cannot purify anything, not even the air. And your kidneys cannot purify your blood.

Therefore all worlds and all desires are held by them. By whom? Why 'therefore'? You try to hear what they were saying, but you only manage to catch a few snatches of conversation. You do not even know if you are listening to them, to her, to him or to Him. You do not know if you have to use capital letters when speaking about these persons or parsons. What can you learn from the snatch you heard a few minutes ago? You realise there are many worlds and you wonder if all these worlds have their Christs and their Crosses. If they cannot be saved, they should be destroyed. They kill horses, don't they? And then they flog dead horses. That is what they do in Christless worlds. We should destroy these worlds to prevent their inhabitants from flogging dead horses.

Everything is pervaded by death. What shall we do under the circumstances? We should act because actions speak louder than death. As long as we act we are not dead. And if we are not dead, we are alive. We have no alternative but to be alive and drive death away. It is true that death is not an army of rats so it is not easy to drive him away. So we have to get rid of everything. Much easier, isn't it? If everything is pervaded by death, from now on there will be no everything. From now on we shall be dealing only with nothing. And nothing cannot be pervaded by death. You cannot pervade nothing, can you? Nor can you *invade* it. So you leave nothing in peace. That is what we need – peace, peace, peace. Not peace talks, or peace proposals, or peace conferences, or peace initiatives. Just peace.

The sky is without a support. In this respect we are similar to the sky. Of course we are not identical with it; and yet there is a whole host of angels in our breasts. We sign a lot of petitions in support of this and that, but we are unable to support ourselves. We are utterly without a support – like the sky. One cannot say the sky is supported by our pillars; even by the pillars of our communities. It is not and it is better to drop this subject. No, not for the moment. We have to go on until we find out what supports the sky. Is it the will to power? What kind of power does the sky have? Rain, lightning, thunder. This year a severe drought has ruined the crops. All right, all right. You are a god, our dear sky. And the gods need no support. Except the will to support.

You dwell in the sky but the sky does not know you. No one knows you and if somebody does, this somebody does not know you dwell in the sky. This somebody – or nobody – thinks you live on Earth, in your country house. This somebody is mistaken; so are many somebodies and nobodies. They think you sit in front of your computer, doing something in your study. Your study is the sky – or heaven, if you wish. Somenobodies do not wish anything – as far as you are concerned. To them you are very far; but not in the sky, not in the sky. You are not Lucy so you are not in the sky. But if you say 'Lucy', they

burst into the Beatles' song. Agreed, her body is in the sky. She controls the sky from within. She is my self, the inner controller, the immortal.

The state of dream, the state of waking. You move from one state to the other; you move between them. Stay in one of them and forget all other states, all other worlds. You are it, him, her, this point, this dot. Dots, dots, dots. You are just the first dot. You should not spread yourself too thin. You should not spread yourself at all. Calm yourself, calm yourself. You are just a dot, a suspension point. Suspend your disbelief but on no account should you suspend your belief. You are a leaf, a relief. Only now do you feel an incredible sense of relief. Little by little it grows credible. Now you believe in your relief. And you are wide awake. It is no dream. If you eat a lot of cheese in the evening, you have amazing dreams. You ate no cheese last night.

Life becomes putrid without life. You have to enliven your life. Do not leave it alone. Do not let it down. Do not let it up either, as they say. Do not let it. On no account should you let it be. If you do, it will become putrid. You should interfere in your life's internal affairs. You should interfere everywhere – at least within the areas where your life is likely to stay, if only for a few minutes. You take your life by the scruff of the neck and pull it towards you. And you breathe new life into your life. You can also breathe *old* life into your life: any life will do, provided your life stays alive. If it does not, it risks becoming putrid. As putrid as the body of a dead fox; or a dead dog. You prefer dogs to foxes but it does not really matter. What matters is your life. Alive, alive.

You put the newspaper on your lap and open it, resolved to read one of the pages or at least a few sentences related to this day and age, if not really to your own age. But what counts is your day, the day you are living through and you are *not* to say you are *dying* through this day because you are not; for once you are not dying. Why? Because you are reading a newspaper and this process or ritual brings you up to speed with the latest developments, with life itself; and also with the moment you are *living* through. Yes, yes, yes, yes – now you are attuned to even the slightest variation in the world's breathing and you say to yourself that you are happy; and no sage will ever contradict you as long as you go on reading this newspaper.

You are supposed to receive the threefold knowledge of the world. One knowledge is the knowledge of the world as such. The second knowledge is the knowledge of the world as seen from the outside. The third knowledge is the knowledge of the self that knows the world from the inside, from its heart of hearts. The third knowledge stays in the world's heart of hearts and studies it, them and whatever there is to study and analyse. The third knowledge takes care of your immortality; and yet your immortality is in no way linked to this world. It is rather linked to the other world. So you switch to your second

knowledge, whereupon it sees the other world from the outside. Shortly afterwards, it sees the other world from the inside. You do not. You need the fourth knowledge for that.

Many people believe we are spied upon all the time, even if we manage to abolish this time and all other times, epochs, millennia. But those who continue to spy on us always find enough space to do so with impunity and efficiency: even our tombs have been despoiled over the last 20 years. All these hackers hack into our computer systems to find out where our tombs are located; and once they are aware of their whereabouts, they rush towards our cemeteries and despoil our tombs. That is how this system works and that is why even houses – alias our tombs – have been regularly despoiled for many, many years. Some of us think that our houses are also our tombs. And our tombs must think we are their tombs. And any vicious circle thinks it is a vicious circle.

What does your sixth knowledge tell you? It says, ‘I’m nowhere, you know. I see neither this world nor the other world. I see them neither from the outside nor from the inside. I don’t see them at all. So what? I don’t mind. Do you? I hope you don’t. Never mind, as they say. I see nothing – the no-world, if you prefer. Don’t confuse it with the anti-world. It is neither anti, nor pro, not contra. It is nothing, I tell you. There’s nothing inside the space I see and look at. The fifth knowledge took everything out. A long time ago. Don’t you wish to move to this no-world of mine? You should try, you know. No harm, no harm. No mum, no world. Do you really need your mum? You do? Have you got stuck in your world? Forever? Forever?’

You are one-footed, two-footed, three-footed, four-footed. You lost your first leg – or second leg – in a car accident. Yes, you were injured in a car/road accident and lost one of your legs. Not both of them, mind you. All right, you lost one of your legs, the first one or the second one. But if you have only one leg at your disposal, you can move around. And that is what counts: moving around is a sign of life. Of course you may think as well and thinking is also a sign of life. All right. But let us suppose you have two legs or even three legs. You have two legs; you are an ordinary human being. Well, you need crutches. You have been on crutches for the past six weeks, which means that you do need them. Well, now you have four legs. You are like a dog and you listen to your master’s voice.

You just listen. Please, listen to me! Just for a minute. Not for eternity, mind you. I don’t care about eternity. I care about this moment; and you, whoever you are. I don’t know you either personally or impersonally. I don’t know you at all, as you can see and hear. You don’t listen as usual. You’re used to your non-listening ritual. Life is full of rituals. You don’t need to go to church to perform them. You just stand in front of someone and do not listen to this someone. This is your ritual, not mine. Listen to what I need to say to you. I need it badly, believe me. You don’t save me or give me money. I’ll hold

out. And if I don't, I'll die in my sleep. And if I'm just someone's dream, I'll die in someone else's sleep. What does it matter! I lived, I died. I'll live again, I'll die again. I'll again.

What you? What anyone? Time comes and goes. It is neither continuous nor discontinuous, inconsistent, unborn. Time was born, time was dead. Duration stayed for a while. But what is any duration without time? Nothing at all. Duration is nothing and nothing is duration. We all know these equations; at least I do. So what? I do, I do, I do. I do this and that. I do nothing at all. I think and my thinking is my doing and undoing. I do myself and undo myself. And I do it myself or yourself. Do-it-myself, so to speak. So I speak to say what I do. And I do it myself: I speak and do and do and do. And undo, undo, undo. God can undo the past; humans undo the future. I just undo, undo, undo. Deconstruction? No, just undoing. Much better, much better. Undoing, undoing.

And yet, and not. There are nots, knots, knouts, knouts. Do they understand knouts? Do they speak Russian? They *feel* Russian, that's enough. Knouts, knouts, knouts. All things are full of gods. Are gods knouts? Or knots? Or hard nuts to crack? Soft nuts, soft nuts. Softly, softly. If you take a softly-hardly approach, you'll be happy. You're not? You're a not? You're not god yet, not yet, not yet. Are you standing for election? You are. So you will receive notification of the results in due course. Suppose you are God. So what? You are not. That is what they call 'negative theology'. At least you know you are the Gordian knot. So they cut you, cut you, cut you. You know it as well. You also feel it – it goes without saying. Go without saying. Go as far as you can.

Without this your statement has no meaning. Neither without this nor without that. So you realise that your statement has no meaning: there are too many thisthats. And you have no idea how to deal with them. If you deal with them one by one, you will never remove them completely: you are not immortal. If you remove them en bloc, you will grow so tired you will never be able to go on living, let alone achieving your objectives. So you sit back and forget it, forget it, forget it, as they say and do. You forget faces, eyes and souls that hide behind eyes. You forget yourself: your thoughts, your sins and resurrections. No more births, no more deaths. You are in front of your mantelpiece. Is it yours? Perhaps not. Fire in the grate. Not your fire.

Only lullabies. You are a child again. Your mother sings a tune and repeats a few words. What counts is repetition, not difference. You find a word and repeat it endlessly. You do not even have to look for a word: any word will do, any syllable, any sound. You are lying on the ground, moaning. You continue to moan instead of making a speech. This sound seems to express everything: pain, pleasure, ecstasy, love. No point in writing a treatise on love: all you have to do is lie down and moan. This is your lullaby, your eternal lullaby. You fall asleep, wake up and resume your song, your treatise on love, on life.

Moaning, meaning, moaning. Falling asleep, moaning in your sleep. You are an eternal student, an eternal teenager, an eternal embryo. You can hear your mother's moans.

I thought it was all over but I am still alive, whatever this word means and wherever it is situated right now – not tomorrow, you can never tell. And if you tell something, it does not happen because it stays within your telling and vanishes outside it. You think it vanishes but it does not and you say to yourself that nothing ever vanishes, going from one thing to another, from a corpse to a flower and a worm, and if you say 'and so on', it does mean something; it means that life goes from 'so' to 'on' and vice versa. What do I see? What do I think? It is another matter, another excitement, enlightenment. I am alive – enlivenment – and that is what I see in front of me; and it goes on and on, my life, my aliving.

The sun, the moon. What? Do they rise? Do they rise from the dead? No – they rise from the quick. How so? How come? They come, that is all. They come and you look at them. They are more or less immortal, but your look is not. Not even less. Nor are your eyes, needless to say and think. So you look at the moon and fall in love. So do I. We fall in love with a woman, with a man. We fall in love with everybody because we are Christians, Buddhists and human beings who cannot live without love, even if no god enjoins them to love all passers-by, all dogs. They fall in love, out of love, in love. Their loves rise and reach the sky, Platonic ideas, beauty itself, love itself. The idea of it! The idea of it! The idea of it! What an idea! What an idea! Idea, idea, idea, idea, idea.

