

# Journal314: Part IV, 20-33

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## 20. Thomas Ligotti

- "Like many who have tried their hand at metaphysics, Bahnsen declared that, appearances to the contrary, all reality is the expression of a unified, unchanging force— a cosmic movement that various philosophers have characterized in various ways."
- "As history confirms, people will change their minds about almost anything, from which god they worship to how they style their hair. But when it comes to existential judgments, human beings in general have an unfalteringly good opinion of themselves and their condition in this world and are steadfastly confident they are not a collection of self-conscious nothings." (Ha! maya)
- "As scientists, philosophers, and spiritual figures have testified, our heads are full of illusions; things, including human things, are not dependably what they seem."
- "Immune to the blandishments of religions, countries, families, and everything else that puts both average and above-average citizens in the limelight, pessimists are sideliners in both history and the media. Without belief in gods or ghosts, unmotivated by a comprehensive delusion, they could never plant a bomb, plan a revolution, or shed blood for a cause."
- "Since personal economic gain would be passé as a motive for the new humanity, there would be only one defensible incitement to work: to see one another through to the finish, a project that would keep everyone busy and not just staring into space while they waited for the end. There might even be bright smiles exchanged among these selfless benefactors of those who would never be forced to exist. And how many would speed up the process of extinction once euthanasia was decriminalized and offered in humane and even enjoyable ways?"

- "One would think that neuroscientists and geneticists would have as much reason to head for the cliffs because little by little they have been finding that much of our thought and behavior is attributable to neural wiring and heredity rather than to personal control over the individuals we are, or think we are. But they do not feel suicide to be mandatory just because their laboratory experiments are informing them that human nature may be nothing but puppet nature. Not the slightest tingle of uncanniness or horror runs up and down their spines, only the thrill of discovery. Most of them reproduce and do not believe there is anything questionable in doing so. If they could get a corpse to sit up on an operating table, they would jubilantly exclaim, "It's alive!" And so would we. Who cares that human beings evolved from slimy materials?" (I always wonder why these scientists, and even some philosophers, can talk about, for instance, the 'multi-verse, with a smile, or describe it as liberating, Ha! What a joke: you are a robot, you are a nothing, every possible existence exists, your choices are not really choices since they will all be made)

- "In experiencing the *uncanny*, there is a feeling of *wrongness*...Of course, our internal authority may itself be in the wrong, perhaps because it is a fabrication of consciousness based on a body of laws that are written only within us and not a detector of what is right or wrong in any real sense, since nothing really is right or wrong in any real sense." (Otto is supposed to be the complete opposite of Ligotti, yet this is exactly what Otto says too, Heidegger)

- (the feeling of 'Uncanny') "One day those shoes on the floor of your clothes closet may attract your eye in a way they never have before. Somehow they have become abstracted from your world, appearances you cannot place, lumps of matter without a fixed quality and meaning. You feel confused as you stare at them. What are they? What is their nature? Why should there be something rather than nothing?" (Heidegger)

- "...the ultimate threat to ordinary folk who only want to live in a world and in a way that is natural and familiar to them and their families, even though they are darkly aware that this familiarity is a fabrication that may be invalidated."

- "In the normal course of events, both determinists and indeterminists are one in promoting some kind of operative morality. As guardians of our morale, they feel moral realism to be a necessary truth, whether it is objectively real, as it is to indeterminists, or subjectively "real," as it is to determinists. Without this truth, or "truth," we could not go on living as we always have and believe that being alive is all right."

- "Can one *really* believe in determinism without going insane?...And those who really care cannot be anything but believers in some form of moral realism or "realism," which buttresses the optimistic reality that most people call home and braces up everything you need in order to be you — your country, your loved ones, your job or vocation, your golf clubs, and, in an all around sense, your "way of life." (can one really believe in the multi-verse without going insane?)

- "Only after fealty to countries, gods, and families has been shucked off can we even think about coming to grips with the least endangered of fabrications — the self."

- "Born a prince, so the story goes, the nascent Enlightened One, Siddhartha Gautama, embarked on a quest to neutralize his ego by first leaving behind his family, gods, and sociopolitical station — all in one stroke. But Buddha's way requires a near inhuman dedication, and few of us have that kind of stamina."

- "There are aspects of the scientific world-view which may be damaging to our mental well-being, and that is what everybody intuitively feels" (Metzinger's emphasis; quoted in Trafford)."

- "But could the vulgar materialist actually say that he or she is aware of being no one as a fact and still go on to pretend that he or she is someone? Would this not be another version of Metzinger's asking "Can one really believe in determinism without going insane?"

- *“cultural critic Jens Bjørneboe wrote that “he who hasn’t experienced a full depression alone and over a long period of time — he is a child.”*

- *“In perfect knowledge there is only perfect nothingness, which is perfectly painful if what you want is meaning in your life.” (Ligotti makes this point after referencing Hume and his claim of reason being a 'slave to the passions', i.e. reason does not make us act. '...if there were a curative magic wand on the table eight feet away, it would be too much trouble to go over and pick it up.)*

- *“It is all a vacuous affair with only a chemical prestige. Nothing is either good or bad, desirable or undesirable, or anything else except that it is made so by laboratories inside us producing the emotions on which we live. And to live on our emotions is to live arbitrarily, inaccurately — imparting meaning to what has none of its own. Yet what other way is there to live? Without the ever-clanking machinery of emotion, everything would come to a standstill. There would be nothing to do, nowhere to go, nothing to be, and no one to know.”*

- *“Buddhism and pessimism cannot be pried loose from each other. The likeness between them is simply too pronounced to be overlooked. Buddhists claim that they are not pessimists but realists...The only real discrepancy between the two philosophies is that hundreds of millions of Buddhists have accepted dukkha as the primary reality of existence. How queer that pessimists cannot boast such numbers. While it is not perceived as such by followers of this ancient religion, the disavowed fact is this: Buddhism is pessimism. Yet whereas the pessimism that dares speak its name is met with near universal incredulity, Buddhism may advertise as truth what no pessimist can prove — that suffering is basic to human existence and it should be the work of our lives to liberate ourselves from its grasp.”*

- *“Because no two minds are contoured alike, no one system or collocation of systems will ever be sized to fit all. If truth is what you seek, then the examined life will only take you on a long ride to the limits of solitude and leave you by the side of the road with *your* truth and nothing else.” (this is a good thing, says Vivekananda)*

- *“Since Buddhism’s only objective is attaining enlightenment, that high road to nirvana (see below), it is at one with other religions in pitching a brighter future for believers in deliverance from the woes of this world. One problem: Human beings are rarely so sensitive to the woes of this world that they feel a pressing need to reject all cravings for the pleasures of this world, as Buddhism would have them do. And it seems that any amount of pleasure is pleasure enough to get us to keep the faith that being alive is all right for everyone, or almost everyone, and will certainly be all right for any children we cause to be delivered into this world.”*

- *“Consciousness makes it seem as if (1) there is something to do; (2) there is somewhere to go; (3) there is something to be; (4) there is someone to know. This is what makes consciousness the parent of all horrors, the thing that makes us try to do something, go somewhere, be something, and know someone, such as ourselves, so that we can escape our MALIGNANTLY USELESS being and think that being alive is all right rather than that which should not be.” (me- renounce, find the real Self)*

- *“...ego-death is a state that has nothing but anecdotal evidence to support it, which groups this phenomenon with mystical experiences and revealed religions.”*

- *“And once our egos have been deposed, what would be left of us? By all recorded accounts, everything would be left except what Horwitz called “a vanity, an elaborate delusion, a ruse.”*

- *“Both of these non-dualistic meta-realities do serve the purpose of making sense of human life in their own way. But whether they make us feel good does not seem to matter to either of them. We are just vehicles; they are the drivers. And wherever we are going, as Segal and Schopenhauer have assured us,*

along with every other individual whose consciousness has been opened to the vastness by whatever name or nature, we must keep in mind that we are not what we think we are."

- *"Just a little doubt slipped into the mind, a little trickle of suspicion in the bloodstream, and all those eyes of ours, one by one, open up to the world and see its horror. Then: no belief or body of laws will guard you; no friend, no counselor, no appointed personage will save you; no locked door will protect you; no private office will hide you. Not even the solar brilliance of a summer day will harbor you from horror. For horror eats the light and digests it into darkness."*

- "In his best-known work, *The Denial of Death* (1973), Becker wrote: *"I believe that those who speculate that a full apprehension of man's condition would drive him insane are right, quite literally right."* Zapffe concluded that we kept our heads by "artificially limiting the content of consciousness." Becker stated his identical conclusion as follows: "[ Man] literally drives himself into a blind obliviousness with social games, psychological tricks, personal preoccupations so far removed from the reality of his situation that they are forms of madness, but madness all the same." Outlawed truisms. Taboo commonplaces."

- "In lieu of personal immortality, we are willing to accept the survival of persons and institutions that we regard as extensions of us— our families, our heroes, our religions, our countries."

- "In the end, though, his insistence that we must imagine Sisyphus as happy is as impractical as it is feculent."

- *"All civilizations become defunct. All species die out. There is even an expiration date on the universe itself."*, *"...the universe as nothing in motion."* (this is super important)

- "For the pessimist, everything considered in isolation from human suffering or any cognition that does not have as its motive the origins, nature, and elimination of human suffering is at base recreational, whether it takes the form of conceptual probing or physical action in the world— for example, delving into game theory or traveling in outer space, respectively. And by "human suffering," the pessimist is not thinking of particular sufferings and their relief, but of suffering itself. Remedies may be discovered for certain diseases and sociopolitical barbarities may be amended. But these are only stopgaps. Human suffering will remain insoluble as long as human beings exist."

- "But to express with any adequacy a sense of the uselessness of everything, a nonlinguistic modality would be needed, some effusion out of a dream that amalgamated every gradation of the useless and wordlessly transmitted to us the inanity of existence under any possible conditions."

- "Any kind of existence is useless. Nothing is self-justifying. Everything is justified only in a relativistic potato-masher sense."

- "Christians, Jews, and Muslims have a real problem with a potato-masher system of being. Buddhists have no problem with a potato-masher system because for them there are no absolutes."

- "In truth, we have only one foot in the natural environment of this world. Other worlds are always calling us away from nature. We live in a habitat of unrealities— not of earth, air, water, and wildlife— and cradling illusion trounces grim logic every time."

- (On Zapffe) "To exposit why humanity should not further tarry on earth is one thing; to believe that this proposition will be agreeable to others is quite another."

- (Again, speaking on Zapffe) "The delusional will forever be with us, thereby making pain, fear, and denial of what is right in front of our face the preferred style of living and the one that will be passed on to countless generations." (It seems that Zapffe and Ligotti are both haters of the Earthly, without (like Nietzsche says) any sense of the Other)

-“One would think that neuroscientists and geneticists would have as much reason to head for the cliffs because little by little they have been finding that much of our thought and behavior is attributable to neural wiring and heredity rather than to personal control over the individuals we are, or think we are. But they do not feel suicide to be mandatory just because their laboratory experiments are informing them that human nature may be nothing but puppet nature. Not the slightest tingle of uncanniness or horror runs up and down their spines, only the thrill of discovery. Most of them reproduce and do not believe there is anything questionable in doing so.”

-“Ordinary folk who have nothing to do with supernaturalism and the uncanny and who are resistant to the pessimism of fictions like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *The Thing*, whose principals all suffer death or deformation in their fight to hang on to their lives and their humanity.” (sounds like most trivial interpretations of religion)

-“...And those who really care cannot be anything but believers in some form of moral realism or “realism,” which buttresses the optimistic reality that most people call home and braces up everything you need in order to be you — your country, your loved ones, your job or vocation, your golf clubs, and, in an all around sense, your “way of life.”

-“Only after fealty to countries, gods, and families has been shucked off can we even think about coming to grips with the least endangered of fabrications — the self.”

-“Whatever makes us think that we are what we think we are lies in the fact that we have consciousness, which gives us a sense of being somebody, specifically a human somebody, whatever that may be, since we do not have a definition of “human” on which there is universal agreement. But we do agree that, if only in practice, we are all real-live selves, since we are all self-conscious. And once we have passed through every door that qualifies our selves in some way — be it by name, nationality, occupation, gender, or shoe size — we then stand before the door of consciousness — parent of all horrors. And that is all there is to our existence.”

-(On Metzinger) ““There are aspects of the scientific world-view which may be damaging to our mental well-being, and that is what everybody intuitively feels”

-“that you are nothing but a human puppet would not be impossible to believe. What now? Answer: Now you go insane.”, “But how much more can we take? How will the human race feel about knowing that there is no human race — that there is no one? Would this be the end of the greatest horror tale ever told? Or might it be the reinstatement of the way things had been before we had lives of our own? For now, those who cannot abide even Darwin’s theory without the Creator beside them seem to be safe.”

-“...cultural critic Jens Bjørneboe wrote that “he who hasn’t experienced a full depression alone and over a long period of time — he is a child.”

-“In the recumbence of depression, your information-gathering system collates its intelligence and reports to you these facts: (1) there is nothing to do; (2) there is nowhere to go; (3) there is nothing to be; (4) there is no one to know.”

-“In perfect knowledge there is only perfect nothingness, which is perfectly painful if what you want is meaning in your life.”

- “This is the great lesson the depressive learns: Nothing in the world is inherently compelling.”

- “The alternatives are clear: to live falsely as pawns of affect, or to live factually as depressives, or as individuals who know what is known to the depressive.”

- *"As a threat to human continuance, nihilism is as dead as God."* (me- as Seraphim says: people have grown up within a nihilistic framework and therefore do not "experience" Nihilism the way people a few hundred years ago may have felt it. The Nihilistic experience is needed again)
- *"Key to Nietzsche's popularity with atheistic amoralists is his materialistic mysticism, a sleight of mind that makes the world's meaninglessness into something meaningful and refashions fate into freedom before our eyes."*
- *"Then it begins. This can't be happening, you think— if you can think at all, if you are anything more than a whirlwind of panic. In reality, though, anything can happen now. This is the whispering undercurrent that creeps into your thoughts— nothing is safe and nothing is off limits. All of a sudden something was set in motion that changed everything. Something descended upon you that had been circling above your life from the day you were born. And for the first time you feel that which you have never felt before— the imminence of your own death. There is no possibility for self-deception now. The paradox that came with consciousness is done with. Only horror is left. This is what is real. This is the only thing that was ever real, however unreal it may have seemed.* (me- great, brief description of the Nihilistic experience)
- *"No other life forms know they are alive, and neither do they know they will die. This is our curse alone. Without this hex upon our heads, we would never have withdrawn as far as we have from the natural...Simply put: We are not from here. If we vanished tomorrow, no organism on this planet would miss us. Nothing in nature needs us."*
- *"Even as we survive and reproduce, we know ourselves to be dying in a dark corner of infinity."*
- *"If human pleasure did not have both a lid and a time limit, we would not bestir ourselves to do things that were not pleasurable, such as toiling for our subsistence. And then we would not survive."*
- *"Each breath could be our last. Under such an arrangement, we would either have to become Epicureans and not fear death or, more likely, we would divert from our consciousness the thought that we could die without so much as a heads-up and in the blink of an eye."*
- *"Tønnessen believes that "intellectual honesty" must lead to "ontological despair," ( reason does lead to God, since God is seen through Nothingness and Despair, though still incomprehensible)*
- *"And one thing we know is real: horror. It is so real, in fact, that we cannot be sure it could not exist without us. Yes, it needs our imaginations and our consciousness, but it does not ask or require our consent to use them. Indeed, horror operates with complete autonomy. Generating ontological havoc, it is mephitic foam upon which our lives merely float. And, ultimately, we must face up to it: Horror is more real than we are."*
- *"That we all deserve punishment by horror is as mystifying as it is undeniable."*
- *"Being alive: decades of waking up on time, then trudging through another round of moods, sensations, thoughts, cravings— the complete gamut of agitations— and finally flopping into bed to sweat in the pitch of dead sleep or simmer in the phantasmagorias that molest our dreaming minds. Why do so many of us bargain for a life sentence over the end of a rope or the muzzle of a gun? Do we not deserve to die?"*
- *"No self now, consciously speaking. No feeling your old self or new self, false imaginings if you think about it, self-conscious nothings everywhere you look. No one to hear you weep or scream, making a go of it on your own, bye-bye. No bosom of nature, abandoned on the doorstep of the supernatural, minds full of flagrantly joyless possibilities, a real blunder that was, the human tragedy. No reality to speak of, nobody here but us puppets, contradictory beings, mutants who embody the contorted logic of a paradox. No immortality, ordinary folk and average mortals coming and going, can't stay long, got an appointment with nonexistence, no alternative to consider, being alive was all right*

*while it lasted, so they say. No life story with a happy ending to tell, only a contrivance of horror, then nothingness — and nothing else. No Free Will-to-live, no redemption by a Will-to-die, how depressing. No philosophies to peddle, pessimism a no-sale, optimism had to close its doors, too wicked to pass code. No meanings or mind-games, repression mechanisms broke down, self-deception shuttered its windows. No awakening from a dream within a dream, mutation of consciousness — parent of all horrors, best not mess with it, extinction looking better all the time. No more pleasure, what there was of it, a few crumbs left by chaos at feast, still a good supply of pain, though. No praiseworthy incentives, just bowel-movement pressures, potato-mashing relativism. No euthanasia, bad for the business of life, you're on your own there, but watch out for the eternal return, most horrible idea in the universe. No loving God, omnipotence off duty and omniscience on leave, the deity He dead — the horror, the horror, even the skies of spring and the flowers of summer must ever afterward be poison, blame it on the piecing together of dissociated knowledge. No compassionate Buddha, Body Snatchers got him, heard tell, or some kind of thing, maybe next lifetime. No Good-versus-Evil formulas around here, Azathoth running the show, human beings a mistake or a joke, something pernicious making a nightmare of our world. No being normal and real, the uncanny coming at you full speed, startling and dreadful. No ego-death — enlightenment by accident. No way out of harm's way, better never to have been, worst saved for last. No Last Messiah, buried in the fingernails of midwives and pacifier makers, gone the way of messiahs past. No bleakness either, a failure indeed. No terror management by isolation, anchoring, distraction, sublimation. No tragedies to read or to write, death kept at a safe distance past the vanishing point down the road. No escape routes into a useless bliss, useless existence, malignantly so...*

*- "Some morbid citizens among us might become cataleptic with anxiety because their next breath may be their last, but most of us would not be wrecked by such unrelenting worry."*

*"The belief in the possibility of long-lasting, high-flown pleasures is a deceptive but adaptive flimflam. It seems that nature did not make us to feel too good for too long, which would be no good for the survival of the species, but only to feel good enough for long enough to keep us from complaining that we do not feel good all the time. In the workaday world, complainers will not go far. When someone asks how you are doing, you had better be wise enough to reply, "I can't complain." If you do complain, even justifiably, people will stop asking how you are doing. Complaining will not help you succeed and influence people. You can complain to your physician or psychiatrist because they are paid to hear you complain. But you cannot complain to your boss or your friends, if you have any. You will soon be dismissed from your job and dropped from the social register. Then you will be left alone with your complaints and no one to listen to them.*

*Perhaps then the message will sink into your head: If you do not feel good enough for long enough, you should act as if you do and even think as if you do. That is the way to get yourself to feel good enough for long enough and stop you from complaining for good, as any self-improvement book can affirm. But should you not improve, someone must assume the blame. And that someone will be you. This is monumentally so if you are a pessimist or a depressive. Should you conclude that life is objectionable or that nothing matters — do not waste our time with your nonsense. We are on our way to the future, and the philosophically disheartening or the emotionally impaired are not going to hinder our progress. If you cannot say something positive, or at least equivocal, keep it to yourself. Pessimists and depressives need not apply for a position in the enterprise of life. You have two choices: Start thinking the way God and your society want you to think or be forsaken by all. The decision is yours, since you are a free agent who can choose to rejoin our fabricated world or stubbornly insist on ... what? That we should mollycoddle*

non-positive thinkers like you or rethink how the whole world transacts its business? That we should start over from scratch? Or that we should go extinct? Try to be realistic. We did the best we could with the tools we had. After all, we are only human, as we like to say. Our world may not be in accord with nature's way, but it did develop organically according to our consciousness, which delivered us to a lofty prominence over the Creation. The whole thing just took on a life of its own, and nothing is going to stop it anytime soon. There can be no starting over and no going back. No major readjustments are up for a vote. *And no melancholic head-case is going to bad-mouth our catastrophe.* The universe was created by the Creator, damn it. *We live in a country we love and that loves us back. We have families and friends and jobs that make it all worthwhile. We are somebodies, not a bunch of nobodies without names or numbers or retirement plans. None of this is going to be overhauled by a thought criminal who contends that the world is not doubleplusgood and never will be. Our lives may not be unflawed — that would deny us a better future to work toward — but if this charade is good enough for us, then it should be good enough for you. So if you cannot get your mind right, try walking away. You will find no place to go and no one who will have you. You will find only the same old trap the world over. Lighten up or leave us alone. You will never get us to give up our hopes. You will never get us to wake up from our dreams. We are not contradictory beings whose continuance only worsens our plight as mutants who embody the contorted logic of a paradox.* Such opinions will not be accredited by institutions of authority or by the middling run of humanity. To lay it on the line, whatever thoughts may enter your chemically imbalanced brain are invalid, inauthentic, or whatever dismissive term we care to hang on you, who are only “one of those people.” *So start pretending that you feel good enough for long enough, stop your complaining, and get back in line.* If you are not as strong as Samson — that no-good suicide and slaughterer of Philistines — then get loaded to the gills and return to the trap. Keep your medicine cabinet and your liquor cabinet well stocked, just like the rest of us. *Come on and join the party. No pessimists or depressives invited. Do you think we are morons? We know all about those complaints of yours. The only difference is that we have sense enough and feel good enough for long enough not to speak of them. Keep your powder dry and your brains blocked.* Our shibboleth: “Up the Conspiracy and down with Consciousness.”

## 21. Schopenhauer

- “He who lives to see two or three generations is like a man who sits some time in the conjurer's booth at a fair, and witnesses the performance twice or thrice in succession. The tricks were meant to be seen only once; and when they are no longer a novelty and cease to deceive, their effect is gone.”
- “...in order to increase his pleasures, man has intentionally added to the number and pressure of his needs, which in their original state were not much more difficult to satisfy than those of the brute. Hence luxury in all its forms; delicate food, the use of tobacco and opium, spirituous liquors, fine clothes, and the thousand and one things than he considers necessary to his existence.”
- “The crowd of miserable wretches whose one aim in life is to fill their purses but never to put anything into their heads, offers a singular instance of this torment of boredom. Their wealth becomes a punishment by delivering them up to misery of having nothing to do; for, to escape it, they will rush about in all directions, traveling here, there and everywhere. No sooner do they arrive in a place than they are anxious to know what amusements it affords; just as though they were beggars asking where they could receive a dole! Of a truth, need and boredom are the two poles of human life.”



- *"My philosophy shows the metaphysical foundation of justice and the love of mankind, and points to the goal to which these virtues necessarily lead, if they are practised in perfection. At the same time it is candid in confessing that a man must turn his back upon the world, and that the denial of the will to live is the way of redemption. It is therefore really at one with the spirit of the New Testament...In this sense, then, my doctrine might be called the only true Christian philosophy—however paradoxical a statement this may seem to people who take superficial views instead of penetrating to the heart of the matter."*

- *"The spirit of the New Testament is undoubtedly asceticism, however your protestants and rationalists may twist it to suit their purpose. Asceticism is the denial of the will to live..."*

- *"I refer, not to my own philosophy alone, but to the wisdom of all ages, as expressed in Brahmanism and Buddhism, and in the sayings of Greek philosophers like Empedocles and Pythagoras; as also by Cicero..."*

- *"And true Christianity—using the word in its right sense—also regards our existence as the consequence of sin and error."*

- *"If you want a safe compass to guide you through life, and to banish all doubt as to the right way of looking at it, you cannot do better than accustom yourself to regard this world as a penitentiary..."*

- *"This may perhaps sound strange, but it is in keeping with the facts; it puts others in a right light; and it reminds us of that which is after all the most necessary thing in life—the tolerance, patience, regard, and love of neighbor..."*

- *"If he has a soul above the common, or if he is a man of genius, he will occasionally feel like some noble prisoner of state, condemned to work in the galleys with common criminals; and he will follow his example and try to isolate himself."*

- *"A man finds himself, to his great astonishment, suddenly existing, after thousands and thousands of years of non-existence: he lives for a little while; and then, again, comes an equally long period when he must exist no more. The heart rebels against this, and feels that it cannot be true."*

- *"...in such a world, happiness is inconceivable. How can it dwell where, as Plato says, continual Becoming and never Being is the sole form of existence?"*

- *"a man never is happy, but spends his whole life in striving after something which he thinks will make him so; he seldom attains his goal, and when he does, it is only to be disappointed; he is mostly shipwrecked in the end, and comes into harbor with masts and rigging gone. And then, it is all one whether he has been happy or miserable; for his life was never anything more than a present moment always vanishing; and now it is over."*

- *"The pleasure in this world, it has been said, outweighs the pain; or, at any rate, there is an even balance between the two. If the reader wishes to see shortly whether this statement is true, let him compare the respective feelings of two animals, one of which is engaged in eating the other."*

- *"...misfortune has its uses...If the world were a paradise of luxury and ease, a land flowing with milk and honey, where every Jack obtained his Jill at once and without any difficulty, men would either die of boredom or hang themselves."*

- *"I shall be told, I suppose, that my philosophy is comfortless—because I speak the truth; and people prefer to be assured that everything the Lord has made is good. Go to the priests, then, and leave philosophers in peace! At any rate, do not ask us to accommodate our doctrines to the lessons you have been taught. That is what those rascals of sham philosophers will do for you. Ask them for any doctrine you please, and you will get it. Your University professors are bound to preach optimism; and it is an easy and agreeable task to upset their theories."*

- "...the misery of boredom...boredom is a form of suffering unknown to brutes."
- "The brute flies from death instinctively without really knowing what it is, and therefore without ever contemplating it in the way natural to a man, who has this prospect always before his eyes." (me- the path is narrow)
- "The brute is an embodiment of present impulses, and hence what elements of fear and hope exist in its nature—and they do not go very far—arise only in relation to objects that lie before it and within reach of those impulses: whereas a man's range of vision embraces the whole of his life, and extends far into the past and future." (me- concern for ultimate things, the arbitrariness of culture and time, etc.)
- "Between the ethics of the Greeks and the ethics of the Hindoos, there is a glaring contrast. In the one case (with the exception, it must be confessed, of Plato), the object of ethics is to enable a man to lead a happy life; in the other, it is to free and redeem him from life altogether—as is directly stated in the very first words of the Sankhya Karika."
- "This is the realm of finality; and its opposite would be an infinite existence, exposed to no attack from without, and needing nothing to support it; [Greek: haei hosautos dn], the realm of eternal peace; [Greek: oute giguomenon oute apollumenon], some timeless, changeless state, one and undiversified; the negative knowledge of which forms the dominant note of the Platonic philosophy. *It is to some such state as this that the denial of the will to live opens up the way.*"
- "This is direct proof that existence has no real value in itself; for what is boredom but the feeling of the emptiness of life?" (me- which just is God)
- "Were it of any value in itself, anything unconditioned and absolute, it could not thus end in mere nothing."

## 22. William James

*Starting with his own Nihilistic Experience- "Whilst in this state of philosophic pessimism and general depression of spirits about my prospects, I went one evening into a dressing-room in the twilight to procure some article that was there; when suddenly there fell upon me without any warning, just as if it came out of the darkness, a horrible fear of my own existence. Simultaneously there arose in my mind the image of an epileptic patient whom I had seen in the asylum, a black-haired youth with greenish skin, entirely idiotic, who used to sit all day on one of the benches, or rather shelves against the wall, with his knees drawn up against his chin, and the coarse gray undershirt, which was his only garment, drawn over them inclosing his entire figure. He sat there like a sort of sculptured Egyptian cat or Peruvian mummy, moving nothing but his black eyes and looking absolutely non-human. This image and my fear entered into a species of combination with each other THAT SHAPE AM I, I felt, potentially. Nothing that I possess can defend me against that fate, if the hour for it should strike for me as it struck for him. There was such a horror of him, and such a perception of my own merely momentary discrepancy from him, that it was as if something hitherto solid within my breast gave way entirely, and I became a mass of quivering fear. After this the universe was changed for me altogether. I awoke morning after morning with a horrible dread at the pit of my stomach, and with a sense of the insecurity of life that I never knew before, and that I have never felt since.[ 83] It was like a revelation; and although the immediate feelings passed away, the experience has made me sympathetic with the morbid feelings of others ever since. It gradually faded, but for months I was unable to go out into the dark alone."*

- "To prove this point, Tolstoy quotes the Buddha, Solomon, and Schopenhauer. And he finds only four ways in which men of his own class and society are accustomed to meet the situation. Either mere animal blindness, sucking

*the honey without seeing the dragon or the mice—" and from such a way," he says, "I can learn nothing, after what I now know;" or reflective epicureanism, snatching what it can while the day lasts— which is only a more deliberate sort of stupefaction than the first; or manly suicide; or seeing the mice and dragon and yet weakly and plaintively clinging to the bush of life. Suicide was naturally the consistent course dictated by the logical intellect. "Yet," says Tolstoy, "whilst my intellect was working, something else in me was working too, and kept me from the deed— a consciousness of life, as I may call it, which was like a force that obliged my mind to fix itself in another direction and draw me out of my situation of despair.... During the whole course of this year, when I almost unceasingly kept asking myself how to end the business, whether by the rope or by the bullet, during all that time, alongside of all those movements of my ideas and observations, my heart kept languishing with another pining emotion. I can call this by no other name than that of a thirst for God."*

-*"The method of averting one's attention from evil, and living simply in the light of good is splendid as long as it will work. It will work with many persons; it will work far more generally than most of us are ready to suppose; and within the sphere of its successful operation there is nothing to be said against it as a religious solution. But it breaks down impotently as soon as melancholy comes; and even though one be quite free from melancholy one's self, there is no doubt that healthy-mindedness is inadequate as a philosophical doctrine, because the evil facts which it refuses positively to account for are a genuine portion of reality; and they may after all be the best key to life's significance, and possibly the only openers of our eyes to the deepest levels of truth. The normal process of life contains moments as bad as any of those which insane melancholy is filled with, moments in which radical evil gets its innings and takes its solid turn. The lunatic's visions of horror are all drawn from the material of daily fact. Our civilization is founded on the shambles, and every individual existence goes out in a lonely spasm of helpless agony. If you protest, my friend, wait until you arrive there yourself."*

-*"Healthy Mindedness": "The persons to whom I refer have still retained for the most part their nominal connection with Christianity, in spite of their discarding of its more pessimistic theological elements...His contentment with the finite in cases him like a lobster-shell and shields him from all morbid repining at his distance from the infinite. We have in him an excellent example of the optimism which may be encouraged by popular science."*

-Does this sound like me or not (seriously, ha!): *"We saw how this temperament may become the basis for a peculiar type of religion, a religion in which good, even the good of this world's life, is regarded as the essential thing for a rational being to attend to. This religion directs him to settle his scores with the more evil aspects of the universe by systematically declining to lay them to heart or make much of them, by ignoring them in his reflective calculations, or even, on occasion, by denying outright that they exist."*

-*"Martin Luther by no means belonged to the healthy-minded type in the radical sense in which we have discussed it, and he repudiated priestly absolution for sin."*

-Strange that I seem to agree with this "healthy-mindedness" of James', since it's contrary to the "sick soul" that I relate so much to: "...healthy-mindedness refuses to say anything of the sort.

Evil, it says, is emphatically irrational, and NOT to be pinned in, or preserved, or consecrated in any final system of truth. It is a pure abomination to the Lord, an alien unreality, a waste8 element, to be sloughed off and negated, and the very memory of it, if possible, wiped out and forgotten." This sounds right to me. The Other world has no evil...nor any good! Beyond good and evil! It's Other, not good. Which is why Augustine says that Evil is negative in existence since evil is simply a lack of goodness.

- "Let us see rather whether pity, pain, and fear, and the sentiment of human helplessness may not open a profounder view and put into our hands a more complicated key to the meaning of the situation."

- On Luther- "rather than live forty years more, I would give up my chance of Paradise."

- "But this is only the first stage of the *world-sickness*. Make the human being's sensitiveness a little greater, carry him a little farther over the misery-threshold, and the good quality of the successful moments themselves when they occur is spoiled and vitiated. *All natural goods*

*perish. Riches take wings; fame is a breath; love is a cheat; youth and health and pleasure vanish.* Can things whose end is always dust and disappointment be the real goods which our souls require? Back of everything is the great spectre of universal death, the all-encompassing blackness."

- "To a mind attentive to this state of things and rightly subject to the joy-destroying chill which such a contemplation engenders, the only relief that healthy-mindedness can give is by saying: "Stuff and nonsense, get out into the open air!" or "Cheer up, old fellow, you'll be all right ere long, if you will only drop your morbidness!" But in all seriousness, can such bald animal talk as that be treated as a rational answer? To ascribe religious value to mere happy-go-lucky contentment with one's brief chance at natural good is but the very consecration of forgetfulness and superficiality. Our troubles lie indeed too deep for THAT cure. The fact that we CAN die, that we CAN be ill at all, is what perplexes us; the fact that we now for a moment live and are well is irrelevant to that perplexity. We need a life not correlated with death, a health not liable to

illness, a kind of good that will not perish, a good in fact that flies beyond the Goods of nature."

- "...turn us into melancholy metaphysicians. The pride of life and glory of the world will shrivel. It is after all but the standing quarrel of hot youth and hoary eld. Old age has the last word: the purely naturalistic look at life, however enthusiastically it may begin, is sure to *end in sadness*. *This sadness lies at the heart of every merely positivistic, agnostic, or naturalistic scheme of philosophy.* Let sanguine healthy-mindedness do its best with its strange power of living in the moment and ignoring and forgetting, still the evil background is really there to be thought of, and the skull will grin in at the banquet. In the practical life of the individual, we know how his whole gloom or glee about any present fact depends on the remoter schemes and hopes with which it stands related. Its significance and framing give it the chief part of its value. Let it be known to lead nowhere, and however agreeable it may be in its immediacy, its glow and gilding vanish." (Heisman)

- "Place round them on the contrary the curdling cold and gloom and absence of all permanent meaning which for pure naturalism and the popular science evolutionism of our time are all that is visible ultimately, and the thrill stops short, or turns rather to an anxious trembling."

- "For naturalism, fed on recent cosmological speculations, mankind is in a position similar to that of a set of people living on a frozen lake, surrounded by cliffs over which there is no escape, yet knowing that little by little the ice is melting, and the inevitable day drawing near when the last film of it will disappear, and to be drowned ignominiously will be the human creature's portion."

- "But there is a pitch of unhappiness so great that the goods of nature may be entirely forgotten, and all sentiment of their existence vanish from the mental field. For this extremity of pessimism to be reached, something more is needed than observation of life and reflection upon death. The individual must in his own person become the prey of a pathological melancholy. As the healthy-minded enthusiast succeeds in ignoring evil's very existence, so the subject of melancholy is forced in spite of

himself to ignore that of all good whatever: for him it may no longer have the least reality."

- "Such sensitiveness and susceptibility to mental pain is a rare occurrence where the nervous constitution is entirely normal; one seldom finds it in a healthy subject even where he is the victim of the most atrocious cruelties of outward fortune. So we note here the neurotic constitution..."

- "These have their source in another sphere of existence altogether, in the animal and spiritual region of the subject's being. *Conceive yourself, if possible, suddenly stripped of all the emotion with which your world now inspires you, and try to imagine it AS IT EXISTS, purely by itself, without your favorable or unfavorable, hopeful or apprehensive comment. It will be almost impossible for you to realize such a condition of negativity and deadness.* No one portion of the universe would then have importance beyond another; and the whole collection of its things and series of its events would be without significance, character, expression, or perspective."

(Exactly like when I ask: "Imagine the one thing that you value most in this world. Now, can you imagine that thing, the thing that you feel sustains your own existence, not meaning anything? Can you imagine it losing all meaning? No? Then, we have nothing further to talk about." I have yet to meet a person who has answered "yes." to this question)

- "How can the moribund old man reason back to himself the romance, the mystery, the imminence of great things with which our old earth tingled for him in the days when he was young and well?"

- "In melancholiacs there is usually a similar change, only it is in the reverse direction. The world now looks remote, strange, sinister, uncanny. Its color is gone, its breath is cold, there is no speculation in the eyes it glares with. "It is as if I lived in another century," says one asylum patient."

- "Now there are some subjects whom all this leaves a prey to the profoundest astonishment. The strangeness is wrong. The unreality cannot be. A mystery is concealed, and a metaphysical solution must exist. If the natural world is so double-faced and unhomelike, what world, what thing is real?"

- "In none of these cases was there any intellectual insanity or delusion about matters of fact; but were we disposed to open the chapter of really insane melancholia, with its {159} hallucinations and delusions, it would be a worse story still—desperation absolute and complete, the whole universe coagulating about the sufferer into a material of overwhelming horror, surrounding him without opening or end. Not the conception or intellectual perception of evil, but the grisly blood-freezing heart-palsying sensation of it close upon one, and no other conception or sensation able to live for a moment in its presence. How irrelevantly remote seem all our usual refined optimisms and intellectual and moral consolations in presence of a need of help like this! Here is the real core of the religious problem: Help! help! No prophet can claim to bring a final message unless he says things that will have a sound of reality in the ears of victims such as these."

- "The completest religions would therefore seem to be those in which the pessimistic elements are best developed."

The Divided Self- "Natural good is not simply insufficient in amount and transient, there lurks a falsity in its very being. *Cancelled as it all is by death if not by earlier enemies, it gives no final balance, and can never be the thing intended for our lasting worship. It keeps us from our real good, rather; and renunciation and despair of it are our first step in the direction of the truth.* There are two lives, the natural and the spiritual, and we must lose the one before we can participate in the other."

- "Saint Augustine and Alline both emerged into the smooth waters of inner unity and peace, and I shall next ask you to consider more closely some of the peculiarities of the process of unification, when it occurs. It may come gradually, or it may occur abruptly; it may come through altered feelings, or through altered powers of action; or it may come through new intellectual insights, or through experiences which we shall later have to designate as 'mystical.' However it come, it brings a characteristic sort of relief; and never such extreme relief as when it is cast into the religious mould. Happiness! happiness! religion is only one of the ways in which men gain that gift. Easily, permanently, and successfully, it often transforms the most intolerable misery into the profoundest and most enduring happiness."

- "But neither Bunyan nor Tolstoy could become what we have called healthy-minded. They had drunk too deeply of the cup of bitterness ever to forget its taste, and their redemption is into a universe two stories deep. Each of them realized a good which broke the effective edge of his sadness; yet the sadness was preserved as a minor ingredient in the heart of the faith by which it was overcome."

- *"For Tolstoy's perceptions of evil appear within their sphere to have remained unmodified. His later works show him implacable to the whole system of official values: the ignobility of fashionable life; the infamies of empire; the spuriousness of the church, the vain conceit of the professions; the meannesses and cruelties that go with great success; and every other pompous crime and lying institution of this world. To all patience with such things his experience has been for him a permanent ministry of death."*

- Bunyan: "'I must first pass a sentence of death," he says, "upon everything that can properly be called a thing of this life, even to reckon myself, my wife, my children, my health, my enjoyments, and all, as dead to me, and myself as dead to them; to trust in God through Christ, as touching the world to come, and as touching this world, to count the grave my house, to make my bed in darkness..."

#### Chapter- Saintliness

- "These devotees have often laid their course so differently from other men that, judging them by worldly law, we might be tempted to call them monstrous aberrations from the path of nature."

- "The saintly character is the character for which spiritual emotions are the habitual centre of the personal energy; and there is a certain composite photograph of universal saintliness, the same in all religions, of which the features can easily be traced."

- "Asceticism.— The self-surrender may become so passionate as to turn into self-immolation. It may then so over-rule the ordinary inhibitions of the flesh that the saint finds positive pleasure in sacrifice and asceticism, measuring and expressing as they do the degree of his loyalty to the higher power."

- *"We would make known in our own persons the usefulness of rule, of discipline, of resignation and renunciation; we would teach the necessary perpetuity of suffering, and explain the creative part which it plays. We would wage war upon false optimism; on the base hope of happiness coming to us ready made; on the notion of a salvation by knowledge alone, or by material civilization alone, vain symbol as this is of civilization, precarious external arrangement ill-fitted to replace the intimate union and consent of souls."*

- "Psychologically and in principle, the precept "Love your enemies" is not self-contradictory. It is merely the extreme limit of a kind of magnanimity with which, in the shape of pitying tolerance of our oppressors, we are fairly familiar. Yet if radically followed, it would involve such a breach with our instinctive springs of action as a whole, and with the present world's arrangements, that a critical point would practically be passed, and we should be born into another kingdom of being. Religious emotion makes us feel that other kingdom to be close at hand, within our reach."

- "The saintly person becomes exceedingly sensitive to inner inconsistency or discord, and mixture and confusion grow intolerable. All the mind's objects and occupations must be ordered with reference to the special spiritual excitement which is now its keynote. Whatever is unspiritual taints the pure water of the soul and is repugnant."
- *"The impulse to expiate and do penance is, in its first intention, far too immediate and spontaneous an expression of self-despair and anxiety to be obnoxious to any such reproach. In the form of loving sacrifice, of spending all we have to show our devotion, ascetic discipline of the severest sort may be the fruit of highly optimistic religious feeling."*  
(Suso's mortifications)
- "Since Hindu fakirs, Buddhist monks, and Mohammedan dervishes unite with Jesuits and Franciscans in idealizing poverty as the loftiest individual state..."
- "Accordingly, throughout the annals of the saintly life, we find this ever-recurring note: Fling yourself upon God's providence without making any reserve whatever — take no thought for the morrow — sell all you have and give it to the poor — only when the sacrifice is ruthless and reckless will the higher safety really arrive."
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## 23. Taoism

- "The Tao that can be described is not the enduring and unchanging Tao. The name that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging name."
- "Under these two aspects, it is really the same; but as development takes place, it receives the different names. Together we call them the Mystery."
- "Therefore the sage manages affairs without doing anything..."
- "He constantly (tries to) keep them without knowledge and without desire, and where there are those who have knowledge, to keep them from presuming to act (on it). When there is this abstinence from action, good order is universal."
- "The Tao is (like) the emptiness of a vessel; and in our employment of it we must be on our guard against all fulness. How deep and unfathomable it is, as if it were the Honoured Ancestor of all things!"
- "Heaven and earth do not act from (the impulse of) any wish to be benevolent; they deal with all things as the dogs of grass are dealt with. The sages do not act from (any wish to be) benevolent; they deal with the people as the dogs of grass are dealt with."
- "When wealth and honours lead to arrogancy, this brings its evil on itself. When the work is done, and one's name is becoming distinguished, to withdraw into obscurity is the way of Heaven."
- "The thirty spokes unite in the one nave; but it is on the empty space (for the axle), that the use of the wheel depends. Clay is fashioned into vessels; but it is on their empty hollowness, that their use depends. The door and windows are cut out (from the walls) to form an apartment; but it is on the empty space (within), that its use depends. Therefore, what has a (positive) existence serves for profitable adaptation, and what has not that for (actual) usefulness."
- "Colour's five hues from th' eyes their sight will take; Music's five notes the ears as deaf can make; The flavours five deprive the mouth of taste; The chariot course, and the wild hunting waste Make mad the mind; and objects rare and strange, Sought for, men's conduct will to evil change. Therefore the sage seeks

to satisfy (the craving of) the belly, and not the (insatiable longing of the) eyes. He puts from him the latter, and prefers to seek the former.”

- “What makes me liable to great calamity is my having the body (which I call myself); if I had not the body, what great calamity could come to me?”

- “We look at it, and we do not see it, and we name it 'the Equable.' We listen to it, and we do not hear it, and we name it 'the Inaudible.' We try to grasp it, and do not get hold of it, and we name it 'the Subtle.' With these three qualities, it cannot be made the subject of description; and hence we blend them together and obtain The One. Its upper part is not bright, and its lower part is not obscure. Ceaseless in its action, it yet cannot be named, and then it again returns and becomes nothing. This is called the Form of the Formless, and the Semblance of the Invisible; this is called the Fleeting and Indeterminable. We meet it and do not see its Front; we follow it, and do not see its Back. When we can lay hold of the Tao of old to direct the things of the present day, and are able to know it as it was of old in the beginning, this is called (unwinding) the clue of Tao.”

- “If we could renounce our sagemess and discard our wisdom, it would be better for the people a hundredfold. If we could renounce our benevolence and discard our righteousness, the people would again become filial and kindly. If we could renounce our artful contrivances and discard our (scheming for) gain, there would be no thieves nor robbers.”

- “When we renounce learning we have no troubles. The (ready) 'yes,' and (flattering) 'yea;' — Small is the difference they display. But mark their issues, good and ill; — What space the gulf between shall fill? What all men fear is indeed to be feared; but how wide and without end is the range of questions (asking to be discussed)! The multitude of men look satisfied and pleased; as if enjoying a full banquet, as if mounted on a tower in spring. I alone seem listless and still, my desires having as yet given no indication of their presence. I am like an infant which has not yet smiled. I look dejected and forlorn, as if I had no home to go to.”

- “The multitude of men all have enough and to spare. I alone seem to have lost everything. *My mind is that of a stupid man; I am in a state of chaos.* Ordinary men look bright and intelligent, while I alone seem to be benighted. They look full of discrimination, while I alone am dull and confused. *I seem to be carried about as on the sea, drifting as if I had nowhere to rest. All men have their spheres of action, while I alone seem dull and incapable, like a rude borderer. (Thus) I alone am different from other men, but I value the nursing-mother (the Tao).*”

- “The grandest forms of active force From Tao come, their only source. Who can of Tao the nature tell? Our sight it flies, our touch as well. Eluding sight, eluding touch, The forms of things all in it crouch; Eluding touch, eluding sight, There are their semblances, all right. Profound it is, dark and obscure; Things' essences all there endure.”

- “So, in their beautiful array, Things form and never know decay. How know I that it is so with all the beauties of existing things? By this (nature of the Tao).”

- “There was something undefined and complete, coming into existence before Heaven and Earth. How still it was and formless, standing alone, and undergoing no change, reaching everywhere and in no danger (of being exhausted)! It may be regarded as the Mother of all things. I do not know its name, and I give it the designation of the Tao (the Way or Course). Making an effort (further) to give it a name I call it The Great.”

- “...if he proceed to active movement, he will lose his throne.”



- "The sage, when employed, becomes the Head of all the Officers (of government); and in his greatest regulations he employs no violent measures."
- "The kingdom is a spirit-like thing, and cannot be got by active doing...Hence the sage puts away excessive effort, extravagance, and easy indulgence."
- "He who would assist a lord of men in harmony with the Tao will not assert his mastery in the kingdom by force of arms."
- "Calm and repose are what he prizes; victory (by force of arms) is to him undesirable. To consider this desirable would be to delight in the slaughter of men; and he who delights in the slaughter of men cannot get his will in the kingdom."
- "The Tao, considered as unchanging, has no name."
- "Simplicity without a name Is free from all external aim. With no desire, at rest and still, All things go right as of their will."
- "Thus it was that when the Tao was lost, its attributes appeared; when its attributes were lost, benevolence appeared; when benevolence was lost, righteousness appeared; and when righteousness was lost, the proprieties appeared."
- *"Scholars of the highest class, when they hear about the Tao, earnestly carry it into practice. Scholars of the middle class, when they have heard about it, seem now to keep it and now to lose it. Scholars of the lowest class, when they have heard about it, laugh greatly at it. If it were not (thus) laughed at, it would not be fit to be the Tao."*  
(section/chapter 41)
- *"The Tao is hidden, and has no name; but it is the Tao which is skilful at imparting (to all things what they need) and making them complete."*
- "The violent and strong do not die their natural death. I will make this the basis of my teaching."
- "I know hereby what advantage belongs to doing nothing (with a purpose). There are few in the world who attain to the teaching without words, and the advantage arising from non-action."
- "Or fame or life, Which do you hold more dear? Or life or wealth, To which would you adhere? Keep life and lose those other things; Keep them and lose your life:— which brings Sorrow and pain more near? Thus we may see, Who cleaves to fame Rejects what is more great; Who loves large stores Gives up the richer state."
- "Purity and stillness give the correct law to all under heaven."
- "There is no guilt greater than to sanction ambition; no calamity greater than to be discontented with one's lot; no fault greater than the wish to be getting. Therefore the sufficiency of contentment is an enduring and unchanging sufficiency."
- "Without going outside his door, one understands (all that takes place) under the sky; without looking out from his window, one sees the Tao of Heaven. The farther that one goes out (from himself), the less he knows. Therefore the sages got their knowledge without travelling; gave their (right) names to things without seeing them; and accomplished their ends without any purpose of doing so."
- "He who devotes himself to learning (seeks) from day to day to increase (his knowledge); he who devotes himself to the Tao (seeks) from day to day to diminish (his doing). He diminishes it and again diminishes it, till he arrives at doing nothing (on purpose). Having arrived at this point of non-action, there is nothing which he does not do."
- "The sage has no invariable mind of his own; he makes the mind of the people his mind. To those who are good (to me), I am good; and to those who are not good (to me), I am also good;— and thus (all) get to

be good. To those who are sincere (with me), I am sincere; and to those who are not sincere (with me), I am also sincere;— and thus (all) get to be sincere.”

- “Therefore all things without exception honour the Tao, and exalt its outflowing operation.”

- “(The Tao) which originated all under the sky is to be considered as the mother of them all. When the mother is found, we know what her children should be. When one knows that he is his mother's child, and proceeds to guard (the qualities of) the mother that belong to him, to the end of his life he will be free from all peril.”

- “Let him keep his mouth closed, and shut up the portals (of his nostrils), and all his life he will be exempt from laborious exertion. Let him keep his mouth open, and (spend his breath) in the promotion of his affairs, and all his life there will be no safety for him.”

- *“They shall wear elegant and ornamented robes, carry a sharp sword at their girdle, pamper themselves in eating and drinking, and have a superabundance of property and wealth;— such (princes) may be called robbers and boasters. This is contrary to the Tao surely!”*

- “He who has in himself abundantly the attributes (of the Tao) is like an infant.”

- “And in the knowledge wisdom finds its throne. All life-increasing arts to evil turn; Where the mind makes the vital breath to burn, (False) is the strength, (and o'er it we should mourn.) When things have become strong, they (then) become old, which may be said to be contrary to the Tao. Whatever is contrary to the Tao soon ends.”

- “He who knows (the Tao) does not (care to) speak (about it); he who is (ever ready to) speak about it does not know it...He (who knows it) will keep his mouth shut and close the portals (of his nostrils). He will blunt his sharp points and unravel the complications of things; he will attemper his brightness, and bring himself into agreement with the obscurity (of others). This is called 'the Mysterious Agreement.'”

- “the kingdom is made one's own (only) by freedom from action and purpose. How do I know that it is so? By these facts:— In the kingdom the multiplication of prohibitive enactments increases the poverty of the people; the more implements to add to their profit that the people have, the greater disorder is there in the state and clan; the more acts of crafty dexterity that men possess, the more do strange contrivances appear; the more display there is of legislation, the more thieves and robbers there are. Therefore a sage has said, *‘I will do nothing (of purpose), and the people will be transformed of themselves; I will be fond of keeping still, and the people will of themselves become correct. ‘I will take no trouble about it, and the people will of themselves become rich; I will manifest no ambition, and the people will of themselves attain to the primitive simplicity.’*”

- “Misery!— happiness is to be found by its side! Happiness!— misery lurks beneath it!”

- “Shall we then dispense with correction? The (method of) correction shall by a turn become distortion, and the good in it shall by a turn become evil. The delusion of the people (on this point) has indeed subsisted for a long time. Therefore the sage is (like) a square which cuts no one (with its angles); (like) a corner which injures no one (with its sharpness). He is straightforward, but allows himself no license; he is bright, but does not dazzle.”

- “(It is the way of the Tao) to act without (thinking of) acting; to conduct affairs without (feeling the) trouble of them; to taste without discerning any flavour; to consider what is small as great, and a few as many; and to recompense injury with kindness.”

- “The sage does not act (so), and therefore does no harm.” (Pascal: if all men could learn to sit in their room most bad things would be eliminated)

- "Therefore the sage desires what (other men) do not desire, and does not prize things difficult to get; he learns what (other men) do not learn, and turns back to what the multitude of men have passed by. Thus he helps the natural development of all things, and does not dare to act (with an ulterior purpose of his own)."
- "My words are very easy to know, and very easy to practise; but there is no one in the world who is able to know and able to practise them. There is an originating and all-comprehending (principle) in my words, and an authoritative law for the things (which I enforce). It is because they do not know these, that men do not know me. They who know me are few, and I am on that account (the more) to be prized. It is thus that the sage wears (a poor garb of) hair cloth, while he carries his (signet of) jade in his bosom."
- *"To know and yet (think) we do not know is the highest (attainment); not to know (and yet think) we do know is a disease."* (Socrates, Maya)
- "When the people do not fear what they ought to fear, that which is their great dread will come on them. Let them not thoughtlessly indulge themselves in their ordinary life; let them not act as if weary of what that life depends on. It is by avoiding such indulgence that such weariness does not arise. Therefore the sage knows (these things) of himself, but does not parade (his knowledge); loves, but does not (appear to set a) value on, himself."
- "The people make light of dying because of the greatness of their labours in seeking for the means of living. It is this which makes them think light of dying. Thus it is that to leave the subject of living altogether out of view is better than to set a high value on it."
- "Those who are skilled (in the Tao) do not dispute (about it); the disputatious are not skilled in it. Those who know (the Tao) are not extensively learned; the extensively learned do not know it."

## 24- Buddhism

- "We may not be happy to hear about our death, but contemplating and meditating on death is very important for the effectiveness of our Dharma practice. This is because it prevents the main obstacle to our Dharma practice – the laziness of attachment to the things of this life..."
- *LIFE OF BUDDHA BY ASVAGHOSHA BODHISATTVA*
- "All flesh submerged in the sea of sorrow; all diseases collected as the bubbling froth; decay and age like the wild billows; death like the engulfing ocean; embarking lightly in the boat of wisdom he will save the world from all these perils, by wisdom stemming back the flood."
- "In the self-twined meshes of folly and ignorance all flesh poor and in misery, helplessly lying, the king of the law has come forth, to rescue these from bondage."
- "Bodhisattva affected by the words; shaking with apprehension, he deeply sighed; *constrained at heart because of the pain of age; with shaking head and constant gaze, he thought upon this misery of decay; what joy or pleasure can men take, he thought, in that which soon must wither, stricken by the marks of age; affecting all without exception; though gifted now with youth and strength, yet not one but soon must change and pine away. The eye beholding such signs as these before it, how can it not be oppressed by a desire to escape?*"
- "what rest or quiet can there be! Alas! that worldly men, blinded by ignorance and oppressed with dark delusion, though the robber sickness may appear at any time, yet live with blithe and joyous hearts!" On this, turning his chariot back again, he grieved to think upon the pain of sickness. As a man beaten and wounded sore, with body weakened, leans upon his staff, so dwelt he in the seclusion of his palace, lone-seeking, hating worldly pleasures."

- "The king himself then went forth to observe everything successively, and to make the gardens even yet more attractive, selecting with care the attendant women, that they might excel in every point of personal beauty; quick in wit and able to arrange matters well, fit to ensnare men by their winning looks; he placed additional keepers along the king's way, he strictly ordered every offensive sight to be removed, and earnestly exhorted the illustrious coachman, to look well and pick out the road as he went." (distractions)

- ""This is a dead man: all his powers of body destroyed, life departed; his heart without thought, his intellect dispersed; his spirit gone, his form withered and decayed; stretched out as a dead log; family ties broken—all his friends who once loved him, clad in white cerements, now no longer delighting to behold him, remove him to lie in some hollow ditch tomb."

- "The prince was now harassed and perplexed in mind; his body bent upon the chariot leaning-board, with bated breath and struggling accents, stammered thus, "Oh worldly men! *how fatally deluded! beholding everywhere the body brought to dust, yet everywhere the more carelessly living; the heart is neither lifeless wood nor stone, and yet it thinks not 'all is vanishing!'*" Then turning, he directed his chariot to go back, and no longer waste his time in wandering. *How could he, whilst in fear of instant death, go wandering here and there with lightened heart!*" (me- Pascal, Vivekananda, Heidegger, Kempus)

- "He, addressing the women, said, "Now all of you, so graceful and fair, see if you cannot by your combined power hit on some device; *for beauty's power is not forever. Still it holds the world in bondage, by secret ways and lustful arts; but no such loveliness in all the world as yours, equal to that of heavenly nymphs; the gods beholding it would leave their queens, spirits and Rishis would be misled by it; why not then the prince, the son of an earthly king? why should not his feelings be aroused? This prince indeed, though he restrains his heart and holds it fixed, pure-minded, with virtue uncontaminated, not to be overcome by power of women...*"

- "But Bodhisattva, peaceful and collected, firm as a rock, difficult to move, hearing all these women's talk, unaffected either to joy or sorrow, was driven still more to serious thought, sighing to witness such strange conduct, and beginning to understand the women's design, by these means to disconcert his mind, not knowing that *youthful beauty soon falls, destroyed by old age and death, fading and perishing! This is the great distress! What ignorance and delusion (he reflected) overshadow their minds: "Surely they ought to consider old age, disease, and death, and day and night stir themselves up to exertion, whilst this sharp double-edged sword hangs over the neck. What room for sport or laughter, beholding those monsters, old age, disease, and death? A man who is unable to resort to this inward knowledge, what is he but a wooden or a plaster man, what heart-consideration in such a case!* (me- Pascal) Like the double tree that appears in the desert, with leaves and fruit all perfect and ripe, the first cut down and destroyed, the other unmoved by apprehension, so it is in the case of the mass of men: they have no understanding either!"

- "It is not that I am careless about beauty, or am ignorant of the power of human joys, but only that I see on all the impress of change; therefore my heart is sad and heavy; if these things were sure of lasting, without the ills of age, disease, and death, then would I too take my fill of love; and to the end find no disgust or sadness."

- "To know that other men grow old, sicken, and die, would be enough to rob such joys of satisfaction; yet how much more in their own case (knowing this) would discontentment fill the mind; to know such pleasures hasten to decay, and their bodies likewise; if, notwithstanding this, men yield to the power of love, their case indeed is like the very beasts."

- "It is but to seduce one with a hollow lie—such ways are not for me to practise; or, for those who love the truth and honesty; for they are, forsooth, unrighteous ways, and such a disposition is hard to reverence; shaping one's conduct after one's likings, liking this or that, and seeing no harm in it, what method of experience is this! A hollow compliance, and a protesting heart, such method is not for me to follow; but this I know, old age, disease, and death, these are the great afflictions which accumulate, and overwhelm me with their presence; on these I find no friend to speak, alas!"

- "...the eyes see all things falling in decay, and yet the heart finds joy in following them..."

- "Distracted, as I never was before; sleepless by night and day, how can I then indulge in pleasure? Old age, disease, and death consuming me, their certainty beyond a doubt, and still to have no heavy thoughts, in truth my heart would be a log or stone."

- "The king, his father, hearing of the prince, his heart estranged from thoughts of pleasure, was greatly overcome with sorrow, and like a sword it pierced his heart...And so the king increased the means for gratifying the appetite for pleasure; both night and day the joys of music wore out the prince, opposed to pleasure; disgusted with them, he desired their absence, his mind was weaned from all such thoughts, he only thought of age, disease, and death..."

- "All low desire removed, most perfect peace ensued; and fully now in Samâdhi he saw the misery and utter sorrow of the world; the ruin wrought by age, disease, and death; the great misery following on the body's death; and yet men not awakened to the truth!"

- "'I am a Shâman, depressed and sad at thought of age, disease, and death; I have left my home to seek some way of rescue, but everywhere I find old age, disease, and death; all things hasten to decay and there is no permanency. *Therefore I search for the happiness of something that decays not, that never perishes, that never knows beginning, that looks with equal mind on enemy and friend, that heeds not wealth nor beauty; the happiness of one who finds repose alone in solitude, in some unfrequented dell, free from molestation, all thoughts about the world destroyed; dwelling in some lonely hermitage, untouched by any worldly source of pollution, begging for food sufficient for the body.*"

- "The prince now entering the city, there met him men and women, earnest for their several ends; the old besought him for their children, the young sought something for the wife, others sought something for their brethren; all those allied by kinship or by family, aimed to obtain their several suits, all of them joined in relationship dreading the pain of separation. And now the prince's heart was filled with joy, as he suddenly heard those words "separation and association." "These are joyful sounds to me,"

- "Then he explained his dread of age, disease, and death, and sought respectfully permission to become a hermit. "For all things in the world," he said, "though now united, tend to separation." Therefore he prayed to leave the world; desiring to find "true deliverance."

- "to give up your father and your sacred duties, this is not to act religiously; you should suppress this thought of 'leaving home,' and undertake your worldly duties, find your delight in getting an illustrious name, and after this give up your home and family." The prince, with proper reverence and respectful feelings, again besought his royal father; but promised if he could be saved from four calamities, that he would give up the thought of "leaving home." If he would grant him life without end, no disease, nor undesirable old age, and no decay of earthly possessions, then he would obey and give up the thought of "leaving home."

- "The prince again besought his father, "If you may not grant me these four prayers, then let me go I pray, and leave my home. O! place no difficulties in my path; *your son is dwelling in a burning house, would you*

*indeed prevent his leaving it!* To solve a doubt is only reasonable, who could forbid a man to seek its explanation? Or if he were forbidden, then by self-destruction he might solve the difficulty, in an unrighteous way: and if he were to do so, who could restrain him after death?"

- "The royal father, seeing his son's mind so firmly fixed that it could not be turned, and that it would be waste of strength to bandy further words or arguments, forthwith commanded more attendant women, to provoke still more his mind to pleasure..."

- "And now the prince seated, in his beauty, looked with thought on all the waiting women; before, they had appeared exceeding lovely, their laughing words, their hearts so light and gay, their forms so plump and young, their looks so bright; but now, how changed! so uninviting and repulsive. And such is woman's disposition! how can they, then, be ever dear, or closely trusted; such false appearances! and unreal pretences; they only madden and delude the minds of men."

- "Would that you would listen with attentive mind; we know that you delight to act religiously; it is certain, then, without a doubt, this is not the time for you to enter the forest wilds; a feeling of deep pity consumes our heart! You, if you be indeed moved by religion, ought to feel some pity for our case; let your kindly feelings flow abroad, to comfort us who are worn at heart; let not the tide of sorrow and of sadness completely overwhelm the outlets of our heart; as the torrents which roll down the grassy mountains; or the calamities of tempest, fiery heat, and lightning; for so the grieving heart has these four sorrows, turmoil and drought, passion and overthrow...Religion requires not the wild solitudes; you can practise a hermit's duties in your home; studiously thoughtful, diligent in expedients, this is to lead a hermit's life in truth. A shaven head, and garments soiled with dirt—to wander by yourself through desert wilds—this is but to encourage constant fears, and cannot be rightly called 'an awakened hermit's life....Your loving mother who cherished you so kindly, with no regard for self, through years of care, as the cow deprived of her calf, weeps and laments, forgetting to eat or sleep; you surely ought to return to her at once, to protect her life from evil..."

- "my fear of birth, old age, disease, and death, has led me to disobey, and disregard his extreme kindness. Whoever neglects right consideration about his present life, and because he hopes to escape in the end, therefore disregards all precautions in the present: on this man comes the inevitable doom of death. It is the knowledge of this, therefore, that weighs with me, and after long delay has constrained me to a hermit's life; hearing of my father, the king, and his grief, my heart is affected with increased love; but yet, all is like the fancy of a dream, quickly reverting to nothingness."

- "This, then, would be the consequence of compliance: that I, who, delighting in religion, am gradually getting wisdom, should now quit these quiet woods, and returning home, partake of sensual pleasures, and thus by night and day increase my store of misery."

- "'For having spewed forth lust, passion, and ignorance, shall I return to feed upon it? as a man might go back to his vomit! such misery, how could I bear? Like a man whose house has caught fire, by some expedient finds a way to escape, will such a man forthwith go back and enter it again? such conduct would disgrace a man! So I, beholding the evils, birth, old age, and death, to escape the misery, have become a hermit; shall I then go back and enter in, and like a fool dwell in their company? ...escape is born from quietness and rest..."

- "I fear birth, old age, disease, and death, and so I seek to find a sure mode of deliverance; I have put away thought of relatives and family affection..." (Theresa of Avila, St. Farigno)

- "...the wise man seeing the bitterness of sorrow, stamps out and destroys the risings of desire; that which the world calls virtue, is but another form of this baneful law;

worldly men enjoying the pleasure of covetous desire then every form of careless conduct results..."

- "covetousness seeks for something to satisfy its longings; foolish men regard these things as permanent, and as the necessary requirements of life, but, in sooth, there is no permanent cessation of sorrow; for by coveting to appease these desires we really increase them; there is no character of permanency therefore about them."

- "Whatever our condition in the world, still sorrow accumulate around us."

- "the appearance of lustful desire; the wise man will have nothing to do with it; he would rather throw his body into the water or fire, or cast himself down over a steep precipice. Seeking to obtain heavenly pleasures, what is this but to remove the place of sorrow, without profit."

- "better to walk along the way of purity, or rather follow the pure law of self-denial, hate the practice of impurity, reflect on what was said of old, not obstinate in one belief or one tradition, with sincere mind accepting all true words, and ever banishing sinful sorrow (i.e. sin, the cause of grief)."

- "I desire to get rid of birth, old age, and death, with body restrained, to beg my food; with appetites moderated, to keep in my retreat; and then to avoid the evil modes of a future life, this is to find peace in two worlds: now then I pray you pity me not. Pity, rather, those who rule as kings!"

- "...death as a robber with a drawn sword follows us all, desiring to catch his prey; how then should we wait for old age, ere we bring our mind to a religious life? Inconstancy is the great hunter, age his bow, disease his arrows, in the fields of life and death he hunts for living things as for the deer; when he can get his opportunity, he takes our life; who then would wait for age?"

- "Destroying life to gain religious merit, what love can such a man possess? even if the reward of such sacrifices were lasting, even for this, slaughter would be unseemly; how much more, when the reward is transient! Shall we, in search of this, slay that which lives, in worship? this is like those who practise wisdom, and the way of religious abstraction, but neglect the rules of moral conduct."

- "Have you been long an ascetic, divided from your family and broken from the bonds of love, like the elephant who has cast off restraint? Full of wisdom, completely enlightened, you seem well able to escape the poisonous fruit of this world."

- "...whilst in that state of abstraction rising higher, perceiving there is a place beyond any bodily condition, adding still and persevering further in practising wisdom, rejecting this fourth dhyâna, firmly resolved to persevere in the search, still contriving to put away every desire after form, gradually from every pore of the body there is perceived a feeling of empty release, and in the end this extends to every solid part, so that the whole is perfected in an apprehension of emptiness. In brief, perceiving no limits to this emptiness, there is opened to the view boundless knowledge. Endowed with inward rest and peace, the idea of 'I' departs, and the object of 'I'—clearly discriminating the non-existence of matter, this is the condition of immaterial life."

- "...as the wild bird which escapes from its prison trap, so, getting away from all material limitations, we thus find perfect release. Thus ascending above the Brahmans, deprived of every vestige of bodily existence, we still endure. Endued with wisdom! let it be known this is real and true deliverance."

- *"Absence, extinction, and unoccupancy—these are not the Buddhist conception of emptiness. Buddhists' Emptiness is not on the plane of relativity. It is Absolute Emptiness transcending all forms of mutual relationship, of subject*

*and object, birth and death, God and the world, something and nothing, yes and no, affirmation and negation. In Buddhist Emptiness there is no time, no space, no becoming, no-thing-ness; it is what makes all these things possible; it is a zero full of infinite possibilities, it is a void of inexhaustible contents."* (Cioran- the void of plenitude)  
Suzuki, Daisetz Teitaro

## 25. Hinduism

*Katha Upanishad*

### Chapter 1

- "23. Ask for sons and grandsons who will live

A hundred years. Ask for herds of cattle,  
Elephants and horses, gold and vast land,  
And ask to live as long as you desire.

24. Or, if you can think of anything more  
Desirable, ask for that, with wealth and  
Long life as well. Nachiketa, be the ruler  
Of a great kingdom, and I will give you  
The utmost capacity to enjoy

25. The pleasures of life. Ask for beautiful  
Women of loveliness rarely seen on earth,  
Riding in chariots, skilled in music,  
To attend on you. But Nachiketa,  
Don't ask me about the secret of death.

NACHIKETA

26. *These pleasures last but until tomorrow,  
And they wear out the vital powers of life.  
How fleeting is all life on earth! Therefore  
Keep your horses and chariots, dancing*

27. *And music, for yourself. Never can mortals  
Be made happy by wealth. How can we be  
Desirous of wealth when we see your face  
And know we cannot live while you are here?*

This is the boon I choose and ask you for.

28. *Having approached an immortal like you,  
How can I, subject to old age and death,  
Ever try to rejoice in a long life*

*For the sake of the senses' fleeting pleasures?*

29. Dispel this doubt of mine, O king of death:

Does a person live after death or does he not?

Nachiketa asks for no other boon

Than the secret of this great mystery

### Chapter 2



- 2. Perennial joy or passing pleasure?

This is the choice one is to make always.

The wise recognize these two, but not

The ignorant. The first welcome what leads

To abiding joy, *though painful at the time.*

The latter run, goaded by their senses,

After what seems immediate pleasure.

3. Well have you renounced these passing pleasures

So dear to the senses, Nachiketa,

And turned your back on the way of the world

Which makes mankind forget the goal of life.

4. Far apart are wisdom and ignorance.

The first leads one to Self-realization;

The second makes one more and more

Estranged from his real Self.

5. Ignorant of their ignorance, yet wise

In their own esteem, these deluded men

Proud of their vain learning go round and round

6. Like the blind led by the blind. Far beyond

Their eyes, hypnotized by the world of sense,

Opens the way to immortality.

"I am my body; when my body dies,

I die." Living in this superstition

They fall life after life under my sway.

7. *It is but few who hear about the Self.*

*Fewer still dedicate their lives to its*

*Realization.* Wonderful is the one

Who speaks about the Self; rare are they

Who make it the supreme goal of their lives.

Blessed are they who, through an illumined

Teacher, attain to Self-realization.

10. *I know that earthly treasures are transient*

*And never can I reach the eternal through them.* (me- no amount of "works" gets you 'enlightenment', luther, kierkegaard, mystics, Nihilism, etc.)

*Hence have I renounced all my desires for earthly treasures*

*To win the eternal through your instruction.*

*I spread before your eyes, Nachiketa,*

*The fulfillment of all worldly desires:*

*Power to dominate the earth, delights*

*Celestial gained through religious rites,*

*Miraculous powers beyond time and space.*

*These with will and wisdom have you renounced.*

14. Teach me of That you see as beyond right

And wrong (me- Nietzsche- beyond good and evil), cause and effect, past and future.<sup>8</sup>

15. I will give you the Word all the scriptures

Glorify, all spiritual disciplines

Express, to attain which aspirants lead

A life of sense-restraint and self-naughting.

16. It is O M. This symbol of the Godhead

Is the highest. Realizing it one finds

Complete fulfillment of all one's longings.

17. It is of the greatest support to all seekers.

23. The Self cannot be known through study

Of the scriptures, nor through the intellect,

Nor through hearing learned discourses.

The Self can be attained only by those

Whom the Self chooses. Verily unto them

Does the Self reveal himself. (Third Mundaka, First Kanda, 8)

24. The Self cannot be known by anyone

Who desists not from unrighteous ways,

Controls not his senses, stills not his mind,

And practices not meditation.

25. None else can know the omnipresent Self,

Whose glory sweeps away the rituals

Of the priest and the prowess of the warrior

And puts death itself to death.

Chapter 3

- 5. When one lacks discrimination

And his mind is undisciplined, the senses

Run hither and thither like wild horses.

6. But they obey the rein like trained horses

When one has discrimination and has made

*The mind one-pointed* (Kierkegaard). Those who lack

Discrimination, with little control

Over their thoughts and far from pure,

Reach not the pure state of immortality

8. But wander from death to death; but those

Who have discrimination, with a still mind

And a pure heart, reach journey's end,

Never again to fall into the jaws of death.

9. With a discriminating intellect

As charioteer and a trained mind as reins,

They attain the supreme goal of life

To be united with the Lord of Love.

*Brahman is the first cause and last refuge.*

12. Brahman, the hidden Self in everyone  
Does not shine forth. He is revealed only  
*To those who keep their mind one-pointed*  
On the Lord of Love and thus develop  
A superconscious manner of knowing.

13. Meditation enables them to go  
Deeper and deeper into consciousness,  
From the world of words to the world of thoughts,  
Then beyond thoughts to wisdom in the Self.

14. *Get up! Wake up! Seek the guidance of an*  
*Illumined teacher and realize the Self.*  
*Sharp like a razor's edge, the sages say,*  
*Is the path, difficult to traverse.*

15. *The supreme Self is beyond name and form,*  
*Beyond the senses, inexhaustible,*  
*Without beginning, without end, beyond*  
*Time, space, and causality, eternal,*  
*Immutable.* Those who realize the Self  
Are forever free from the jaws of death.

Part 2, Chapter 1

- *Thus we look to the world*  
*Outside and see not the Self within us.*  
A sage withdrew his senses from the world  
Of change and, seeking immortality,  
Looked within and beheld the deathless Self.

2. *The immature run after sense pleasures*  
*And fall into the widespread net of death.*  
*But the wise, knowing the Self as deathless,*  
*Seek not the changeless in the world of change.*

*Mundaka Upanishad*

- "6. 'That which cannot be seen, nor seized, which has no family and no caste, no eyes nor ears, no hands nor feet, the eternal, the omnipresent (all-pervading), infinitesimal, that which is imperishable, that it is which the wise regard as the source of all beings.'"

- "5. If a man performs his sacred works when these flames are shining, and the oblations follow at the right time, then they lead him as sun-rays to where the one Lord of the Devas dwells.

6. Come hither, come hither! the brilliant oblations say to him, and carry the sacrificer on the rays of the sun, while they utter pleasant speech and praise him, saying: 'This is thy holy Brahma-world (Svarga), gained by thy good works.' 7. But frail, in truth, are those boats, the sacrifices, the eighteen, in which this lower ceremonial has been told. Fools who praise this as the highest good, are subject again and again to

old age and death. 8. *Fools dwelling in darkness, wise in their own conceit, and puffed up with vain knowledge, go round and round staggering to and fro, like blind men led by the blind.* 9. Children, when they have long lived in ignorance, consider themselves happy. Because those who depend on their good works are, owing to their passions, improvident, they fall and become miserable when their life (in the world which they had gained by their good works) is finished. 10. *Considering sacrifice and good works as the best, these fools know no higher good, and having enjoyed (their reward) on the height of heaven, gained by good works, they enter again this world or a lower one.* 11. *But those who practise penance and faith in the forest, tranquil, wise, and living on alms, depart free from passion through the sun to where that immortal Person dwells whose nature is imperishable.* 12. Let a Brâhmana, after he has examined all these worlds which are gained by works, acquire freedom from all desires. *Nothing that is eternal (not made) can be gained by what is not eternal (made).* Let him, in order to understand this, take fuel in his hand and approach a Guru who is learned and dwells entirely in Brahman."

## 26. Montaigne

- "Cicero says- "that to study philosophy is nothing but to prepare one's self to die."
- "how much I have less to do with the commodities of life, by reason that I begin to lose the use and pleasure of them, by so much I look upon death with less terror. Which makes me hope, that the further I remove from the first, and the nearer I approach to the latter, I shall the more easily exchange the one for the other."
- "I disengage myself throughout from all worldly relations..."
- "Besides, live as long as you can, you shall by that nothing shorten the space you are to be dead; 'tis all to no purpose; you shall be every whit as long in the condition you so much fear, as if you had died at nurse."
- "Our very religion itself has no surer human foundation than the contempt of death."
- "...how much I have less to do with the commodities of life, by reason that I begin to lose the use and pleasure of them, by so much I look upon death with less terror. Which makes me hope, that the further I remove from the first, and the nearer I approach to the latter, I shall the more easily exchange the one for the other."
- "he who should teach men to die would at the same time teach them to live."
- "...how is it possible a man should disengage himself from the thought of death, or avoid fancying that it has us every moment by the throat?"
- "They go, they come, they gallop and dance, and not a word of death. All this is very fine; but withal, when it comes either to themselves, their wives, their children, or friends, surprising them at unawares and unprepared, then, what torment, what outcries, what madness and despair! Did you ever see anything so subdued, so changed, and so confounded?"

## 27. Ecclesiastes

- "All is vanity."
- "...the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun."

-“I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind. What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be counted.”

-“...he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.”

-“So I became great and I surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.”

-“They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return.”

-“*Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind.*”

-“He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income...”

-“The more words, the more vanity, and what is the advantage to man? For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow?”

## 28. Will Durant

-“In those “happy days” men agreed that life was evil: Gautama called the extinction of individual consciousness the greatest good, and the Church described life as a vale of tears. *Men could afford to be pessimists about the earth, because they were optimists about the sky;* behind those clouds they saw the isles of the blessed, the abode of everlasting bliss.”

-“Science does not offer consolation, it offers death. *Everything, from the unwinding universe of the astronomers to the college girl irradiating life with beauty and laughter, must pass away:* this handsome youth, erect and vigorous, fresh from athletic victories, will be laid low tomorrow by some modest, ingratiating germ; this noble pianist, who has dignified his time with perfection, and has taught a million souls to forget themselves in beauty, is already in the clutch of death, and will, within a decade, be rotting in the tomb. The greatest question of our time is not communism vs. individualism, not Europe vs. America, not even the East vs. the West; it is whether men can bear to live without God.”

-“Egypt builds and Persia destroys it; Persia builds and Greece destroys it; Greece builds and Rome destroys it; Islam builds and Spain destroys it; Spain builds and England destroys it; Europe builds and Europe destroys it. Men kill one another at first with sticks and stones, then with arrows and lances, then with phalanxes and cohorts, then with cannon and musketry, then with dreadnoughts and submarines, then with tanks and planes; the scale and grandeur of construction and progress are equaled by the scale and terror of destruction and war.”

-“We taught people how to read, and they enrich the “tabloids” and motion pictures; we invented the radio, and they pour out, a hundred times more abundantly than before, the music of savages and the prejudices of mobs. We gave them, through technology and engineering, unprecedented wealth -- miraculous automobiles, luxurious travel, and spacious homes; only to find that peace departs as riches come, that automobiles over-ride morality and connive at crime, that quarrels grow bitterer as the spoils increase, and that the largest houses are the bloodiest battlegrounds of the ancient war between woman and man...We dreamed of socialism, and found our own souls too greedy to make it possible; in our hearts we too are capitalists, and have no serious objection to becoming rich.”

-“All things, said Aristotle, have been discovered and forgotten many times over. Progress, he assures us, is a delusion; human affairs are like the sea, which on its surface is disturbed into a thousand motions, and seems to be headed somewhere, while at its bottom it is comparatively changeless and still. What we call progress is, perhaps, mere superficial change: a succession of fashions in dress, transportation, government, psychology, religion; Christian Science, behaviorism, democracy, automobiles, and pants are not progress, they are change; they are new ways of doing old things, new errors in the vain attempt to understand eternal mysteries. Underneath these varying phenomena the essence remains the same; the man who uses the steam shovel and the electric drill, the tractor and the tank, the adding-machine and the machinegun, the airplane and the bomb, is the same sort of man as those who used wooden ploughs, flint knives, log wheels, bows and arrows, knot writing, and poisoned spear-heads; the tool differs, the end is the same; the scale is vaster, the purposes as crude and selfish, as stupid and contradictory, as murderous and suicidal, as in prehistoric or ancient days; everything has progressed except man. All history, then, all the proud record of human accumulations and discoveries, seems at times to be a futile circle, a weary tragedy in which Sisyphus man repeatedly pushes invention and labor up the high hill of civilization and culture, only to have the precarious structure again and again topple back into barbarism...”

-“history, as Bacon said, is the planks of a shipwreck, and nothing seems certain in it except decadence, degeneration, and death. *A thousand varieties of man -- Piltdown, Neanderthal, Chellean, Acheulean, Mousterian, Aurignacian, Cro-magnon, Rhodesian, Pekin man -- lived for thousands of years, fought, thought, invented, painted, carved, made children, and left no more to posterity than a few flints and scratches, forgotten for millennia and found only by the picks and spades of our inquisitive day. A thousand civilizations have disappeared under the ocean or the earth, leaving, like Atlantis, merely a legend behind...*” (this is a huge part of the Nihilistic experience, the complete disappearance of everything)

-“Almost every idea this strange organism will have will be a delusion; almost every perception will be a prejudice. It will rear fine theories of free will and immortal life, and “from hour to hour” it will “rot and rot”; it will construct great systems of philosophy, in which the drop of water will explain the sea.”

-“Given science, and there would soon be wealth, which would make men happy; given science, and there would soon be truth, which would make men free. Universal education would spread the findings of science, liberate men from superstition, and make them fit for democracy...a picture was unfolded of universal struggle and death; and decade-by-decade the optimism of the nineteenth century yielded to the pessimism of today...The biologists reported that all life lives at the expense of other life, that big things eat little things and are eaten in turn; that strong organisms use and abuse weak organisms in a hundred thousand ways forever; that the ability to kill is the ultimate test of survival; that reproduction is suicide, and that love is the prelude to replacement and death.”

-“Here, as example and symbol of all life, is my dog “Wolf,” who owes her existence to the olfactory attractiveness of her police-dog mother to her collie sire. She eats greedily and drinks abstemiously (she is a teetotaler, and despite the pressure of current fashions refuses all alcoholic beverages); she chases whatever we throw, takes the coziest seats in the house, receives our affection as a matter of course, falls into a rut, and lures to our porch half a hundred lovers. All night long our neighbor’s Airedale waits at our door, and moans like a Troubadour. What but bad poetry is the difference between this and love?”

-“Where such a faith, after supporting men for centuries, begins to weaken, life narrows down from a spiritual drama to a biological episode; it sacrifices the dignity conferred by a destiny endless in time, and shrinks to a strange interlude between a ridiculous birth and an annihilating death. Reduced to a

microscopic triviality by the perspective of science, the informed individual loses belief in himself and his race, and enterprises of great pith and moment, which once aroused his effort and admiration, awaken in him only skepticism and scorn. Faith and hope disappear; doubt and despair are the order of the day."

- "If a man is a materialist, or a mechanist, or whatever he likes to call himself, I can see for him no escape from belief in a futility so prolonged and complicated and diabolical and preposterous as to be worse than absurd; and as I do not know that such a tragic absurdity is not a fact, I can only know my native inability to believe that it is one." (quoting Edwin Robinson)

## 29. Pseudo-Dionysius

- "Therewith, they learn that It is the Cause of all things and yet Itself is nothing, because It super-essentially transcends them all."

## 30- Thomas Aquinas

- "I can write no more. I have seen things that make my writings like straw." On his infused contemplation.

## 31. Clifford Williams

## 32. Aldous Huxley

- "As recently as three hundred years ago an expression of thoroughgoing world denial and even world condemnation was both orthodox and comprehensible. "We should feel wonder at nothing at all in Nature except only the Incarnation of Christ." In the seventeenth century, Lallemant's phrase seemed to make sense. Today it has the ring of madness." (Vivekananda was told that he was a type of Man, one of renunciation, that had been long buried years ago)

- "Let me add, before we leave this subject, that there is no form of contemplation, even the most quietistic, which is without its ethical values. Half at least of all morality is negative and consists in keeping out of mischief."

- "The one-sided contemplative leaves undone many things that he ought to do; but to make up for it, he refrains from doing a host of things he ought not to do. *The sum of evil, Pascal remarked, would be much diminished if men could only learn to sit quietly in their rooms.* The contemplative whose perception has been cleansed does not have to stay in his room. He can go about his business, so completely satisfied to see and be a part of the divine Order of Things that he will never even be tempted to indulge in what Traherne called "the dirty Devices of the world."

- "Contemplatives are not likely to become gamblers, or procurers, or drunkards; they do not as a rule preach intolerance, or make war; do not find it necessary to rob, swindle or grind the faces of the poor." (Ligotti, Cioran)

- "...if they practice it in the height, they will become conduits through which some beneficent influence can flow out of that other country into a world of darkened selves, chronically dying for lack of it."

- "Meanwhile I had turned, at the investigator's request, from the portrait of Cézanne to what was going on, inside my head, when I shut my eyes. This time, the inscape was curiously unrewarding. The field of

vision was filled with brightly colored, constantly changing structures that seemed to be made of plastic or enameled tin. "Cheap," I commented. "Trivial. Like things in a five-and-ten." And all this shoddiness existed in a closed, cramped universe. "It's as though one were below decks in a ship," I said. "A five-and-ten-cent ship." And as I looked, it became very clear that this five-and-ten-cent ship was in some way connected with human pretensions, with the portrait of Cézanne, with A.B. among the Dolomites overacting his favorite character in fiction. *This suffocating interior of a dime-store ship was my own personal self; these gimcrack mobiles of tin and plastic were my personal contributions to the universe.*"

- "The outer world is what we wake up to every morning of our lives, is the place where, willy-nilly, we must try to make our living. In the inner world there is neither work nor monotony. We visit it only in dreams and musings, and its strangeness is such that we never find the same world on two successive occasions. What wonder, then, if human beings in their search for the divine have generally preferred to look within! Generally, but not always. In their art no less than in their religion, *the Taoists and the Zen Buddhists looked beyond visions to the Void, and through the Void at "the ten thousand things" of objective reality.*" (me- Cioran, Vivekananda, Tillich, Suzuki)

- "Over against the quietist stands the active-contemplative, the saint, the man who, in Eckhart's phrase, is ready to come down from the seventh heaven in order to bring a cup of water to his sick brother. Over against the arhat, retreating from appearances into an entirely transcendental Nirvana, stands the Bodhisattva, for whom Suchness and the world of contingencies are one, and for whose boundless compassion every one of those contingencies is an occasion not only for transfiguring insight, but also for the most practical charity."

- "Mescaline opens up the way of Mary, but shuts the door on that of Martha. It gives access to contemplation— but to a contemplation that is incompatible with action and even with the will to action, the very thought of action. In the intervals between his revelations the mescaline taker is apt to feel that, though in one way everything is supremely as it should be, in another there is something wrong. His problem is essentially the same as that which confronts the quietist..."

- "How could one reconcile this timeless bliss of seeing as one ought to see with the temporal duties of doing what one ought to do and feeling as one ought to feel? "One ought to be able," I said, "to see these trousers as infinitely important and human beings as still more infinitely important." One ought— but in practice it seemed to be impossible. This participation in the manifest glory of things left no room, so to speak, for the ordinary, the necessary concerns of human existence, above all for concerns involving persons. For persons are selves and, in one respect at least, I was now a Not-self, simultaneously perceiving and being the Not-self of the things around me."

- "For if one always saw like this, one would never want to do anything else. Just looking, just being the divine Not-self of flower, of book, of chair, of flannel. That would be enough. But in that case what about other people? What about human relations?"

- "In life, man proposes, God disposes."

- "The whole is disorganized. But each individual fragment is in order, is a representative of a Higher Order. The Highest Order prevails even in the disintegration. The totality is present even in the broken pieces. More clearly present, perhaps, than in a completely coherent work. At least you aren't lulled into a sense of false security by some merely human, merely fabricated order. You have to rely on your immediate perception of the ultimate order. So in a certain sense disintegration may have its advantages. But of course it's dangerous, horribly dangerous. Suppose you couldn't get back, out of the chaos..."



- "And anyhow the body seemed perfectly well able to look after itself. In reality, of course, it always does look after itself."

- "It was inexpressibly wonderful, wonderful to the point, almost, of being terrifying. And suddenly I had an inkling of what it must feel like to be mad. Schizophrenia has its heavens as well as its hells and purgatories."

- "Alas, this paradise of cleansed perception, of pure one-sided contemplation, was not to endure. The blissful intermissions became rarer, became briefer, until finally there were no more of them; there was only horror. Most takers of mescaline experience only the heavenly part of schizophrenia."

- "...I found myself all at once on the brink of panic. This, I suddenly felt, was going too far. Too far, even though the going was into intenser beauty, deeper significance. The fear, as I analyze it in retrospect, was of being overwhelmed, of disintegrating under a pressure of reality greater than a mind, accustomed to living most of the time in a cosy world of symbols, could possibly bear. *The literature of religious experience abounds in references to the pains and terrors overwhelming those who have come, too suddenly, face to face with some manifestation of the *Mysterium tremendum*. In theological language, this fear is due to the incompatibility between man's egotism and the divine purity, between man's self-aggravated separateness and the infinity of God.* Following Boehme and William Law, we may say that, by unregenerate souls, the divine Light at its full blaze can be apprehended only as a burning, purgatorial fire. An almost identical doctrine is to be found in The Tibetan Book of the Dead, where the departed soul is described as shrinking in agony from the Pure Light of the Void, and even from the lesser, tempered Lights, in order to rush headlong into the comforting darkness of selfhood as a reborn human being, or even as a beast, an unhappy ghost, a denizen of hell. Anything rather than the burning brightness of unmitigated Reality — anything! The schizophrenic is a soul not merely unregenerate, but desperately sick into the bargain. His sickness consists in the inability to take refuge from inner and outer reality (as the sane person habitually does) in the homemade universe of common sense — the strictly human world of useful notions, shared symbols and socially acceptable conventions. The schizophrenic is like a man permanently under the influence of mescaline, and therefore unable to shut off the experience of a reality which he is not holy enough to live with, which he cannot explain away because it is the most stubborn of primary facts, and which, because it never permits him to look at the world with merely human eyes, scares him into interpreting its unremitting strangeness, its burning intensity of significance, as the manifestations of human or even cosmic malevolence, calling for the most desperate countermeasures, from murderous violence at one end of the scale to catatonia, or psychological suicide, at the other. And once embarked upon the downward, the infernal road, one would never be able to stop. That, now, was only too obvious. "If you started in the wrong way," I said in answer to the investigator's questions, "everything that happened would be a proof of the conspiracy against you. It would all be self-validating. You couldn't draw a breath without knowing it was part of the plot." "So you think you know where madness lies?" My answer was a convinced and heartfelt, "Yes." "And you couldn't control it?" "No I couldn't control it. If one began with fear and hate as the major premise, one would have to go on to the conclusion." "Would you be able," my wife asked, "to fix your attention on what The Tibetan Book of the Dead calls the Clear Light?" I was doubtful. "Would it keep the evil away, if you could hold it? Or would you not be able to hold it?" I considered the question for some time. "Perhaps," I answered at last, "perhaps I could — but only if there were somebody there to tell me about the Clear Light. One couldn't do it by oneself. That's the point, I suppose, of the Tibetan ritual — someone sitting there all the time and telling you what's what." After listening to the record of this part of the

experiment, I took down my copy of Evans-Wentz's edition of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, and opened at random. "*O nobly born, let not thy mind be distracted.*" That was the problem— to remain undistracted. Undistracted by the memory of past sins, by imagined pleasure, by the bitter aftertaste of old wrongs and humiliations, by all the fears and hates and cravings that ordinarily eclipse the Light. What those Buddhist monks did for the dying and the dead, might not the modern psychiatrist do for the insane? Let there be a voice to assure them, by day and even while they are asleep, that in spite of all the terror, all the bewilderment and confusion, the ultimate Reality remains unshakably itself and is of the same substance as the inner light of even the most cruelly tormented mind. By means of such devices as recorders, clock-controlled switches, public address systems and pillow speakers it should be very easy to keep the inmates of even an understaffed institution constantly reminded of this primordial fact. Perhaps a few of the lost souls might in this way be helped to win some measure of control over the universe— *at once beautiful and appalling, but always other than human, always totally incomprehensible*— in which they find themselves condemned to live."

- "I had returned to that reassuring but profoundly unsatisfactory state known as "being in one's right mind." That humanity at large will ever be able to dispense with Artificial Paradises seems very unlikely. Most men and women lead lives at the worst so painful, at the best so monotonous, poor and limited that the urge to escape, the longing to transcend themselves if only for a few moments, is and has always been one of the principal appetites of the soul."

- Quoting Goethe: "We should talk less and draw more. I personally should like to renounce speech altogether and, like organic Nature, communicate everything I have to say in sketches. That fig tree, this little snake, the cocoon on my window sill quietly awaiting its future— all these are momentous signatures. A person able to decipher their meaning properly would soon be able to dispense with the written or the spoken word altogether. The more I think of it, there is something futile, mediocre, even (I am tempted to say) foppish about speech. By contrast, how the gravity of Nature and her silence startle you, when you stand face to face with her, undistracted, before a barren ridge or in the desolation of the ancient hills."

- "Verbalists are suspicious of the non-verbal; rationalists fear the given, non-rational fact; intellectuals feel that "what we perceive by the eye (or in any other way) is foreign to us as such and need not impress us deeply." Besides, this matter of education in the non-verbal humanities will not fit into any of the established pigeonholes. It is not religion, not neurology, not gymnastics, not morality or civics, not even experimental psychology. This being so the subject is, for academic and ecclesiastical purposes, non-existent and may safely be ignored altogether or left, with a patronizing smile, to those whom the Pharisees of verbal orthodoxy call cranks, quacks, charlatans and unqualified amateurs."

- "Under a more realistic, a less exclusively verbal system of education than ours, every Angel (in Blake's sense of that word) would be permitted as a sabbatical treat, would be urged and even, if necessary, compelled to take an occasional trip through some chemical Door in the Wall into the world of transcendental experience. If it terrified him, it would be unfortunate but probably salutary. If it brought him a brief but timeless illumination, so much the better. In either case the Angel might lose a little of the confident insolence sprouting from systematic reasoning and the consciousness of having read all the books."

- "*Near the end of his life Aquinas experienced Infused Contemplation. Thereafter he refused to go back to work on his unfinished book. Compared with this, everything he had read and argued about and written— Aristotle and the*

*Sentences, the Questions, the Propositions, the majestic Summas — was no better than chaff or straw.* For most intellectuals such a sit-down strike would be inadvisable, even morally wrong. But the Angelic Doctor had done more systematic reasoning than any twelve ordinary Angels, and was already ripe for death.”

- “This lowering of what may be called the biological efficiency of the brain seems to permit the entry into consciousness of certain classes of mental events, which are normally excluded, because they possess no survival value. Similar intrusions of biologically useless, but aesthetically and sometimes spiritually valuable material may occur as the result of illness or fatigue; or they may be induced by fasting, or a period of confinement in a place of darkness and complete silence.”

- “If men and women torment their bodies, it is not only because they hope in this way to atone for past sins and avoid future punishments; it is also because they long to visit the mind’s antipodes and do some visionary sightseeing. Empirically and from the reports of other ascetics, they know that fasting and a restricted environment will transport them where they long to go. *Their self-inflicted punishment may be the door to paradise.*”

- “In vision, men perceive a profusion of what Ezekiel calls ‘stones of fire’, of what Weir Mitchell describes as ‘transparent fruit’. These things are self-luminous, exhibit a praeter-natural brilliance of color and possess a praeter-natural significance. The material objects which most nearly resemble these sources of visionary illumination are gem-stones. To acquire such a stone is to acquire something whose preciousness is guaranteed by the fact that it is in the Other World. Hence man’s otherwise inexplicable passion for gems and hence his attribution to precious stones of therapeutic and magical virtue. The causal chain, I am convinced, begins in the psychological Other World of visionary experience, descends to earth, and mounts again to the theological Other World of heaven. In this context the words of Socrates, in the *Phaedo*, take on a new significance. There exists, he tells us, an ideal world above and beyond the world of matter. In this other earth the colours are much purer and much more brilliant than they are down here. ... The very mountains, the very stones have a richer gloss, a lovelier transparency and intensity of hue. The precious stones of this lower world, our highly prized cornelians, jaspers, emeralds, and all the rest, are but the tiny fragments of these stones above. In the other earth there is no stone but is precious and exceeds in beauty every gem of ours.” In other words, precious stones are precious because they bear a faint resemblance to the glowing marvels seen with the inner eye of the visionary. ‘The view of that world,’ says Plato, ‘is a vision of blessed beholders’; for to see things ‘as they are in themselves’ is bliss unalloyed and inexpressible.”

- “From glass, stained or cut, we pass to marble and the other stones that take a high polish and can be used in mass. The fascination exercised by such stones may be gauged by the amount of time and trouble spent in obtaining them. At Baalbek, for example, and, two or three hundred miles further inland, at Palmyra, we find among the ruins columns of pink granite from Aswan. These great monoliths were quarried in Upper Egypt, were floated in barges down the Nile, were towed across the Mediterranean to Byblos or Tripolis, and from thence were hauled, by oxen, mules, and men, uphill to Horns, and from Horns southward to Baalbek or east, across the desert, to Palmyra. What a labour of giants! And, from the utilitarian point of view, how marvellously pointless! But in fact, of course, there was a point - a point that existed in a region beyond mere utility. Polished to a visionary glow, the rosy shafts proclaimed their manifest kinship with the Other World. At the cost of enormous efforts men had transported these stones from their quarry on the Tropic of Cancer; and now, by way of

recompense, the stones were transporting their transporters half-way to the mind's visionary antipodes."

- "I have spoken so far only of the blissful visionary experience and of its interpretation in terms of theology, its translation into art. But visionary experience is not always blissful, It is sometimes terrible. There is hell as well as heaven."

- "...the significance is intrinsically appalling and the light is 'the smoky light' of the Tibetan Book of the Dead, the 'darkness visible' of Milton. In the Journal d'une schizophrène, the autobiographical record of a young girl's passage through madness, the world of the schizophrenic is called le pays d'eclairement - 'the country of lit-upness'. It is a name which a mystic might have used to denote his heaven." ('lit-upness': forced visions into one's view)

- "But for poor Renee, the schizophrenic, the illumination is infernal - an intense electric glare without a shadow, ubiquitous and implacable. Everything that, for healthy visionaries, is a source of bliss, brings to Renee only fear and a nightmarish sense of unreality. The summer sunshine is malignant; the gleam of polished surfaces is suggestive not of gems, but of machinery and enameled tin; the intensity of existence which animates every object, when seen at close range and out of its utilitarian context, is felt as a menace. And then there is the horror of infinity. For the healthy visionary, the perception of the infinite in a finite particular is a revelation of divine immanence; for Renée, it was a revelation of what she calls "the System," the vast cosmic mechanism which exists only to grind out guilt and punishment, solitude and unreality.\*\* Sanity is a matter of degree, and there are plenty of visionaries, who see the world as Renée saw it, but contrive, none the less, to live outside the asylum."

- "And then there is the horror of infinity. For the healthy visionary, the perceptio *The literature of religious experience abounds in references to the pains and terrors overwhelming those who have come, too suddenly, face to face with some manifestation of the Mysterium tremendum. In theological language, this fear is due to the incompatibility between man's egotism and the divine purity, between man's self-aggravated separateness and the infinity of God* n of the infinite in a finite particular is a revelation of divine immanence; for Renee, it was a revelation of what she calls 'the System', the vast cosmic mechanism which exists only to grind out guilt and punishment, solitude and unreality."

- "Sanity is a matter of degree, and there are plenty of visionaries who see the world as Renee saw it, but contrive, none the less, to live outside the asylum. For them, as for the positive visionary, the universe is transfigured - but for the worse. Everything in it, from the stars in the sky to the dust under their feet, is unspeakably sinister or disgusting; every event is charged with a hateful significance; every object manifests the presence of an Indwelling Horror, infinite, all-powerful, eternal."

- "But what is more important for our present purposes is the fact that negative visionary experience may be induced by purely psychological means. Fear and anger bar the way to the heavenly Other World and plunge the mescaline taker into hell."

- "Upon this psychological foundation has been reared the theological doctrine of saving faith - a doctrine to be met with in all the great religious traditions of the world. Eschatologists have always found it difficult to reconcile their rationality and their morality with the brute facts of psychological experience. As rationalists and moralists, they feel that good behavior should be rewarded and that the virtuous deserve to go to heaven. But as psychologists they know that virtue is not the sole or sufficient condition of blissful visionary experience. They know that works alone are powerless and that it is faith, or loving confidence, which guarantees that visionary experience shall be blissful. Negative emotions - the fear which is the absence

of confidence, the hatred, anger, or malice which exclude love - are the guarantee that visionary experience, if and when it comes, shall be appalling. The Pharisee is a virtuous man; but his virtue is of the kind which is compatible with negative emotion. His visionary experiences are therefore likely to be infernal rather than blissful. The nature of the mind is such that the sinner who repents and makes an act of faith in a higher power is more likely to have a blissful visionary experience than is the self-satisfied pillar of society with his righteous indignations, his anxiety about possessions and pretensions, his ingrained habits of blaming, despising, and condemning. Hence the enormous importance attached, in all the great religious traditions, to the state of mind at the moment of death."

- "In life, even the blissful visionary experience tends to change its sign if it persists too long. Many schizophrenics have their times of heavenly happiness; but the fact that (unlike the mescaline taker) they do not know when, if ever, they will be permitted to return to the reassuring banality of everyday experience causes even heaven to seem appalling. But for those who, for whatever reason, are appalled, heaven turns into hell, bliss into horror, the Clear Light into the hateful glare of the land of lit-upness."

- "Of those who die an infinitesimal minority are capable of immediate union with the divine Ground, a few are capable of supporting the visionary bliss of heaven, a few find themselves in the visionary horrors of hell and are unable to escape; the great majority end up in the kind of world described by Swedenborg and the mediums. From this in-world it is doubtless possible to pass, when the necessary conditions have been fulfilled, to worlds of visionary bliss or the final enlightenment. My own guess is that modern spiritualism and ancient tradition are both correct. There is a posthumous state of the kind described in Sir Oliver Lodge's book, *Raymond*; but there is also a heaven of blissful visionary experience; there is also a hell of the same kind of appalling visionary experience as is suffered here by schizophrenics and some of those who take mescaline; and there is also an experience, beyond time, of union with the divine Ground."

- "Mortification of the body may produce a host of undesirable mental symptoms; but it may also open a door into a transcendental world of Being, Knowledge, and Bliss. That is why, in spite of its obvious disadvantages, almost all aspirants to the spiritual life have, in the past, undertaken regular courses of bodily mortification."

- "'How many philosophers, how many theologians, how many professional educators have had the curiosity to open this Door in the Wall? The answer, for all practical purposes, is, None.'" (McKenna, James, said that there isn't more)

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## ***The Perennial Philosophy***

- "...the ultimate Reality is not clearly and immediately apprehended, except by those who have made themselves loving, pure in heart and poor in spirit. This being so, it is hardly surprising that a theology based upon the experience of nice, ordinary, unregenerate people should carry so little conviction. This kind of empirical theology is on precisely the same footing as an empirical astronomy, based upon the experience of naked-eye observers." (Plato's cave, psychedelics)

- "...no saint or founder of a religion, no exponent of the Perennial Philosophy, has ever been optimistic. 'Many are called, but few are chosen.'

- "The Christ of the Gospels is a preacher and not a dispenser of sacraments or performer of rites; he speaks against vain repetitions; he insists on the supreme importance of private worship; he has no use for sacrifices and not much use for the Temple. But this did not prevent historic Christianity from going on its own, all too human, way.
- "For long periods of history and prehistory it would seem that men and women, though perfectly capable of doing so, did not wish to pay attention to problems, which their descendants found absorbingly interesting."
- "Certain thoughts are practically unthinkable except in terms of an appropriate language and within the framework of an appropriate system."
- "...from imbecility to Quantum Theory...to the intuitive knowledge of the Godhead, or to manufacture self-propelled flame-throwers...It is clear that many of the things in which modern men have chosen to pay attention to were ignored by their predecessors. *Consequently the very means for thinking clearly and fruitfully about those things remained uninvented, not merely during prehistoric times, but even to the opening of the modern era.*"
- "...in modern industrialized societies, a few people work their way out of the prevailing occupation with matter and through the prevailing habits of analytical thought into the direct experience of the spiritual Ground of things." (Jnana)
- "The last end of man, the ultimate reason for human existence, is unitive knowledge of the divine Ground...very few will achieve the final end of human existence."
- "...they who know Him most perfectly perceive most clearly that He is infinitely incomprehensible..."
- "...it is easier for us to reach our goal if we are not handicapped by a set of erroneous or inadequate beliefs about the right way to get there and the nature of what we are looking for."
- "The best that can be said for ritualistic legalism is that it improves conduct. It does little, however, to alter character and nothing of itself to modify consciousness." (good to be born in a church, bad to die in one)
- "Nobody has yet invented a Spiritual Calculus, in terms of which we may talk coherently about the divine Ground and of the world conceived as its manifestation. For the present, therefore, we must be patient with the linguistic eccentricities of those who are compelled to describe one order of experience in terms of a symbol-system, whose relevance is to the facts of another and quite different order."
- "In statements such as Eckhart's, God is equated with nothing."
- Quoting "The Cloud of the Unknowing: "This sorrow, if it be truly conceived, is full of holy desire..." (Tolstoy, Vivekananda, Tillich)
- "Sometimes crisis alone, without any preparatory training, is sufficient to make a man forget to be his customary self and become, for the time being, something quite different."
- "The saint is one who knows that every moment of our human life is a moment of crisis; for at every moment we are called upon to make an all-important decision- to choose between the way that leads to death and the spiritual darkness and the way that leads towards light and life; between interests exclusively temporal and the eternal order..."
- "...for the lover of God, every moment is a moment crisis, spiritual training is incomparably more difficult and searching than military training. There are many good soldiers, few saints."
- "...the aim of spiritual training is to make people become selfless in every circumstance of life, while the aim of military training is to make them selfless only in certain very special circumstances and in relation to only

certain classes of human beings.”

- “But if the Gospels tell us very little about the “I” which was Jesus, they make up for this deficiency by telling us inferentially, in the parables and discourses, a good deal about the spiritual “not-I,” whose manifest presence in the mortal man was the reason why his disciples called him the Christ and identified him with the eternal Logos.” (Spong, Vivekananda)

- “The doctrine that God is in the world...the sacredness of nature, and the sinfulness and folly of man's overwhelming efforts to be her master rather than her intelligently docile collaborator.” (Vivekananda, Karma Yoga)

- “...for some inexplicable reason, the travellers still hold fast to the religion of Inevitable Progress...every victory must be paid for...It is because the reality of Progress can never be determined that...the Perennial Philosophy, the question whether Progress is inevitable or even real is not a matter of primary importance...the important thing is that individual men and women should come to the unitive knowledge of the divine Ground, and what interests them in regard to the social environment is not its progressiveness or non-progressiveness (whatever those terms may mean), but the degree to which it helps or hinders individuals in their advance towards man's final end.” (beyond good and evil, Vivekananda, Seraphim)

- “The world inhabited by ordinary, nice, unregenerate people is mainly dull (so dull that they have to distract their minds from being aware of it by all sorts of artificial 'amusements') sometimes briefly and intensely pleasurable, occasionally or quite often disagreeable and even agonizing.”

- *“The slime of personal and emotional love is remotely similar to the water of the Godhead's spiritual being, but of inferior and of insufficient quantity...human beings can do something to mitigate the horrors of their situation by 'keeping one another wet with their slime.' But there can be no happiness or safety in time and no deliverance into eternity, until they give up thinking that slime is enough and, by abandoning themselves to what is in fact their element, call back the eternal waters...the modern idolaters of progress...prefer an agonizing and impossible existence on dry land to love, joy and peace in our native ocean.”* (Vivekananda, Maya, Earthly/Other)

- *“...the Perennial Philosophy will do something to preserve men and women from the temptation to idolatrous worship of things in time- church-worship, state-worship, revolutionary future-worship, humanistic self-worship, all of them essentially and necessarily opposed to charity.”*

- “To the extent that there is attachment to 'I,' 'Me,' 'Mine,' there is no attachment to, and therefore no unitive knowledge of, the divine Ground.” (psychedelics, ego-death)

- “To sum up, that mortification is the best which results in the elimination of self-will, self-interest, self-centered thinking, wishing and imagining...which means, in practice, refraining from about fifty percent of ordinary conversations...to achieve a 'holy indifference' to the temporal success or failure of the cause to which one has devoted one's best energies.” (Tillich, Quietism, Karma, Vivekananda)

- “Until we put an end to particular attachments, there can be no love of God with the whole heart, mind and strength and no universal charity towards all creatures for God's sake. Hence the hard sayings of the Gospels about the need to renounce exclusive family ties.”

- “Mortification is painful...This fact of spiritual experience is sometimes obscured by the language in which it is described...Seen through the dung-colored spectacles of self-interest, the universe looks singularly like a dung-heap.”

- *“Those who choose the profession of artist, philosopher, or man of science, choose, in many cases, a life of poverty and unrewarded hard work.”*

- "...the critical philosophy must mortify his commonsense..."
- "The verbal statements of theology's more or less adequate rationalizations of experience have been taken too seriously and treated with reverence that is due only to the Fact they are intended to describe. It has been fancied that souls are saved if assent is given to what is logically regarded as the correct formula, lost if it is withheld." (Ha! Symbolism, God is too big to be bound by language)
- "Most human beings are not philosophers and care not at all for consistency in thought or action." (Ha!)
- "The poet is born with the capacity of arranging words...This is a great and precious gift; but if the poet remains content with his gift, if he persists in worshiping the beauty in art and nature without going on to make himself capable, through selflessness, of apprehending Beauty as it is in the divine Ground, then he is only an idolater."
- "Rational intelligence makes possible unparalleled success on the one hand and, on the other, a further advance towards spirituality and a return, through unitive knowledge, to the divine ground."  
(Kierkegaard, Vivekananda, Jnana)
- "The orthodox doctrine of the Atonement attributes to God characteristics that would be discreditable even to a human potentate, and its model of the universe is not the product of spiritual insight rationalized by philosophical reflection, but rather the projection of a lawyer's phantasy." (Ha!)
- "'Turning to God without turning from self' – the formula is absurdly simple; and yet, simple as it is, it explains all the follies and iniquities committed in the name of religion."
- "The Christ of the Gospels is a preacher and not a dispenser of sacraments or performer of rites; he speaks against vain repetitions; he insists on the supreme importance of private worship; he has no use for sacrifices and not much use for the Temple. But this did not prevent historic Christianity from going its own, all too human way."
- "For the Buddha of the Pali scriptures, ritual was one of the fetters holding back the soul from enlightenment and liberation. Nevertheless, the religion he founded has made full use of ceremonies, vain repetitions and sacramental rites."
- "The righteous man can escape suffering only by accepting it and passing beyond it...by being converted from righteousness to total selflessness and God-centeredness, by ceasing to be just a Pharisee, or good citizen...The difficulties...are...enormous...those who 'speak with authority,' who has ever said that the road to complete deliverance was easy or the gate anything but 'strait and narrow'?"
- "...an immense increase in technical and governmental efficiency and an immense increase in scientific knowledge- each of them a result of the general shift of Western man's attention from the eternal to the temporal order..."
- "vain repetition...to use the name of God to justify what they do in pursuit of place, power and wealth."
- "The moralists cease to be realistic and commit idolatry inasmuch as they worship, not God, but their own ethical ideals, inasmuch as they treat virtue as an end in itself and not as the necessary condition of the knowledge and love of God- a knowledge and love, without which that virtue will never be made perfect or even socially effective."
- "Our education disparages the more primitive forms of idolatry; but at the same time it disparages, or at the best it ignores, the Perennial Philosophy and the practice of spirituality. In place of mumbo-jumbo at the bottom and the immanent and transcendent Godhead at the top, it sets up, as objects of admiration, faith and worship, a pantheon of strictly human ideas and ideals."
- "In academic circles, and among those who have been subjected to higher education, there are few fetishists and few devout contemplatives; but the enthusiastic devotees of some form of political or social idolatry are as common as blackberries." (Ha! Ben Shapiro and Milo)



- "Self-re[roach is painful; but the very pain is a reassuring proof that the self is still intact: so long as attention is fixed on the delinquent ego, it cannot be fixed upon God..."
- *"The religious systems of the world have been built up, in the main, by men and women who were not completely selfless or enlightened. Hence all religions have had their dark and even frightful aspects, while the good they do is rarely gratuitous, but must, in most cases, be paid for, either on the nail or by installments."*
- "It is permissible to seek God provisionally under a form which is from the first recognized as merely a symbol of Reality, and a symbol which must sooner or later be discarded in favour of what it stands for. To seek Him under a settled form – settled because regarded as the very shape of Reality – is to commit oneself to illusion and a kind of idolatry." (Good to be born in a church, bad to die in a church, Vivekananda)
- *"Probably all persons, even the most saintly, suffer to some extent from distractions...make use of distractions."*
- *"Self-knowledge, leading to self-hatred and humility, is the condition of the love and knowledge of God."*
- "Professionally, in relation to his chosen specialty, a man may be completely mature. Spiritually and sometimes even ethically, in relation to God and his neighbors, he may be hardly more than a fetus." (Ha!)
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"Beliefs" (an essay printed at the end of *The Perennial Philosophy*)

- "Arbitrarily, because it happens to be convenient, because his methods do not allow him to deal with the immense complexity of reality, he selects from the whole of experience only those elements which can be weighed, measured, numbered, or which lend themselves in any other way to mathematical treatment."
- "...many men of science have come to realize that the scientific picture of the world is a partial one – the product of their special competence in mathematics and their special incompetence to deal systematically with aesthetic and moral values, religious experiences and intuitions of significance."
- "The masses,...are convinced that the scientific picture of an arbitrary abstraction from reality is a picture of reality as a whole and that therefore the world is without meaning or value. *But nobody likes living in such a world. To satisfy their hunger for meaning and value, they turn to such doctrines as nationalism, fascism and revolutionary communism. Philosophically and scientifically, these doctrines are absurd; but for the masses in every community, they have this great merit: they attribute the meaning and value that have been taken away from the world as a whole to the particular part of the world in which the believers happen to be living.*" (the influence of Positivism has trickled down for a little more than a century and it has corrupted the thought process and worldviews of almost everyone without their even knowing it! Ha!)
- *"...the philosophy of meaninglessness carried to its logical conclusion. Life was without significance. Values were illusory and ideals merely the inventions of cunning priests and kings. Sensations and animal pleasures alone possessed reality and were alone worth living for. There was no reason why any one should have the slightest consideration for any one else. For those who found rape and murder amusing, rape and murder were fully legitimate activities. And so on."*
- "If it is legitimate to torment and kill in one set of circumstances, it must be equally legitimate to torment and kill in all other circumstances."
- *"The general acceptance of a doctrine that denies meaning and value to the world as a whole, while assigning them in a supreme degree to certain arbitrarily selected parts of the totality, can only have evil and disastrous results...We have thought of ourselves as members of supremely meaningful and valuable communities – deified nations, divine classes and what not – existing within a meaningless universe."* (Ha!)

- "...supplying the masses with 'vital lies' calculated to make those who accepted them not only happy, but well behaved. The truth – which was that there was no meaning or value in the world – should be revealed only to the few who were strong enough to stomach it."
- "Some people, it is true, can live contentedly with a philosophy of meaninglessness for a very long time. But in most cases it will be found that these people possess some talent or accomplishment that permits them to live a life which, to a limited extent, is profoundly meaningful and valuable. Thus an artist, or a man of science can profess a philosophy of general meaninglessness and yet lead a perfectly contented life...artistic creation and scientific research are absorbingly delightful occupations...They are proclaimed to be ends absolutely in themselves – ends so admirable that those who pursue them are excused from bothering about anything else." (Ha! This is Becker! this lack of 'talent' is the driving force of 'mental illness', it comes down to 'stupidity' or not being able to express or 'let out' the crazy thoughts within, maybe even deeper- it would be that the expressions, beyond stupidity or inability to produce expressions, themselves lose all meaning for the person; therefore a person cannot move forward, since the last illusion, the illusion of one's own fulfillment/happiness, is shown to be utterly ludicrous: Nietzsche's 'great contempt', Bertrand Russell's response to Durant about being 'too busy' to discuss the meaning of life, Ha!)
- "Meditation, in other words, is the technique of mysticism...'transcendental consciousness' – the direct intuition of an ultimate spiritual reality that is perceived as simultaneously beyond the self and in some way within it."
- "First Bach fugues, a bore...But training changes the structure of our spiritual experiences. In due course, contact with an obscurely beautiful poem, an elaborate piece of counterpoint or of mathematical reasoning, causes us to feel direct intuitions of beauty and significance." (participation, head held under water)
- "Systematic training in *recollection* and meditation makes possible the mystical experience, which is a direct intuition of ultimate reality."
- "The direct intuition of an impersonal spiritual reality, underlying all being, is in accord with the findings of the majority of the world's philosophers."
- "If he is to transcend the limitations of man's private universe he must be a member of a community which gives him protection against the inclemencies of the environment and makes it easy for him to supply his physical wants. But this is not enough. He must also train himself in the art of being dispassionate and disinterested, must cultivate intellectual curiosity for its own sake and not for what he, as an animal, can get out of it."
- "*Only the disinterested mind can transcend commonsense and pass beyond the boundaries of animal or average-sensual human life. The mystic exhibits disinterestedness in the highest degree possible to human beings and is therefore able to transcend ordinary limitations more completely than the man of science, the artist or the philosopher.*" (maybe the Real Philosopher in his Nothingness/Meaninglessness is at a farther point than the mystic who claims constant 'bliss')
- "We fail to attend to our true relations with ultimate reality and, through ultimate reality, with our fellow beings, because we prefer to attend to our animal nature and to the business of getting on in the world."
- "*Mysticism...is unsatisfactory in moral content. The ultimate reality of the world is not moral ('God is not good') and the mystic who unites himself with ultimate reality is uniting himself with a non-moral being, therefore he is not moral.*" (beyond good and evil, Nihiltheism)

### 33. John Bunyan

- "One morning as I lay in my bed, I was, as at other times, most fiercely assaulted with this temptation to sell and part with Christ, the wicked suggestion still running in my mind, "Sell Him, sell Him, sell Him, sell Him," as fast as a man could speak. Against this I also in my mind, as at other times, I answered, "No, no, not for thousands, thousands, thousands," at least twenty times together. At last, after much striving, even until I was almost out of breath, I felt this thought pass through my heart, "Let Him go if He will." I thought also that I felt my heart freely consent to this. Oh, the diligence of Satan! Oh, the desperateness of man's heart! Now was the battle won, and down I fell, as a bird that is shot from the top of a tree, into great guilt and fearful despair. Now I was as one bound; I felt myself shut up into the judgment to come. Nothing for the next two years would abide with me but damnation and an expectation of damnation. *I did ever so know now what it was to be weary of my life and yet afraid to die.* I Oh, how gladly I would have been anybody but myself, anything but a man, and in any condition but my own. There was nothing that did cross my mind more frequently than that it was impossible for me to be forgiven my transgression and be saved from the wrath to come. (Tolstoy, Kierkegaard, Cioran)

*A Few Sighs From Hell-* "And again, had not God given such a discovery of the sad condition of those that are for the most part rich men, we should have had men concluded absolutely that the rich are the blessed men. Nay, albeit the Lord himself doth so evidently declare *that the rich ones of the world are, for the most part, in the saddest condition, yet they, through unbelief, or else presumption, do harden themselves, and seek for the glory of this world...*"

- "For, as I said before, it is evident, that *they who live after the flesh in the lusts thereof, do not really and seriously think on death,* and the judgment that doth follow after: neither do they indeed endeavour so to do; for did they, it would make them say with holy Job, 'All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come' (Job 14:14). And as I said before, that not only the wicked, but also the godly have their time to depart this life. And the beggar died. The saints of the Lord, *they must be deprived of this life also, they must yield up the ghost into the hands of the Lord their God; they must also be separated from their wives, children, husbands, friends, goods, and all that they have in the world.*"