

# *-Nihilism Preface- (Edit)*

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## *-Nihilism Preface-*

"...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 old. 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." James

"To this extent, nihilism, as the denial of a truthful world, of being, might be a divine way of thinking." Nietzsche

"And to come back again to our first question, "What is the meaning of a philosopher paying homage to ascetic ideals?" We get now, at any rate, a first hint; he wishes to escape from a torture." Nietzsche

This is a work of infinite ambition and utter worthlessness; a work of questions rather than answers. This is an interpretation of Nihilism that finds the 'everyday' view, the mainstream 'philosophical'/intellectual definitions, misguided at best.

I will unapologetically quote from a variety of thinkers at length. Why do people have to 'defend' the use of other authors? Are you offended for having to 're-read' something you already 'know'? Do you simply crave 'originality' from an author? Every *one* wants to pen their name into 'eternity'; every *one* wants to have their words heard; utter garbage. You've most likely interpreted these authors in a different way than in this work, so any quotes that seem 'familiar' should take on a new life for the reader.

"The fact that 'They', who hear and understand nothing but loud idle talk, cannot 'report' any call, is held against the conscience on the subterfuge that it is 'dumb' and manifestly not present-at-hand. With this kind of interpretation the 'they' merely covers up its own failure to hear the call and the fact that its 'hearing' does not reach very far." Heidegger

"Nothing reveals more an extreme weakness of mind than not to know the misery of a godless man."

Pascal

I fight a battle between smug confidence and complete humility; both are equally paradoxical. The experience from which this work stems is as 'real' as anything that pertains to my existence. And yet doubt is at the forefront of every word that is written, every thought that comes into this stream of consciousness. I want to claim 'Truth' and I want to ask for 'help'. This work will include differing tones, and may even seem as if, at least, two authors are writing.

"The neurotic exhausts himself not only in self-preoccupations like hypochondriacal fears and all sorts of fantasies, but also in others: those around him on whom he is dependent become his therapeutic work project; he takes out his subjective problems on them. But people are not clay to be molded; they have needs and counter-wills of their own. The neurotic's frustration as a failed artist can't be remedied by anything but an objective creative work of his own." Becker

"I have all the defects of other people and yet everything they do seems to me inconceivable." Cioran

When I imagine some kind of mythical encounter with any of the thinkers whose ideas I've quoted within this work, I am under no illusions -I'm sure I would perceive even the simple act of being in their presence as something utterly unbearable. The ideas expressed inside these pages are not born from within any worldly, mundane existence of the thinkers, as something intrinsic to their being. Regardless of whether they left behind a vast corpus of 'influential works', nor is it relevant if any managed to endear a great number of admirers, holding the *unthinking* within an almost hypnotic possession, none of this is of concern surrounding the possibility of any form of *message* from Nihilism. Furthermore, I will quickly, and resolutely, deny any such claims of responsibility as to the origin of the coalescent revelations that are spoken of within these writings.

Not a one, including myself, shall be elevated up onto a pedestal. No one can take credit for the humility inducing insights that are shown in this work to be common across time, culture, race, philosophical background, and religious tradition.

As Freud proclaimed:

"I have found little that is 'good' about human beings on the whole. In my experience most of them are trash, no matter whether they publicly subscribe to this or that ethical doctrine or to none at all. That is something that you cannot say aloud, or perhaps even think."

A sentiment with which I emphatically agree with. And, why am I carrying on about this? For one simple, and what should be unambiguous, reason:

*There are no heroes here.*

However, what *is* important concerning these thinkers is the way in which they all, each from their own unique backgrounds and perspectives, articulate a description of the same insights, as they are revealed through a specific, abstract experience - the experience of *Nihilism*. When these revealed insights of Nihilism are expressed, and further, made possible to be perceived as a unified 'voice', they take on a form that represents irrefutability.

This is particularly useful for one, such as myself, who does not have a predominantly strong 'way with words'. Even though names are given, the purpose of the quotes is to show a description of a particular experience, regardless of whether the person writing is a 'proclaimed' Christian, Hindu, 'Nihilist', or Saint, etc. If names were not given, it would be of no consequence, as the quotes attempt to show that there is no distinction; one should not be able to intuit the thinker's 'background', their words should all converge, leaving one with the perception that every thought has emanated from a single, solitary mind.

As Cioran says: existence is plagiarism. I am not stating any 'new' information here. There is nothing to 'know'. Their words are my words, and my words are their words. I hope that my 'voice' gets lost within these pages. There are too many people wanting to be 'heard'. There are too many mouth-noises from those thinking they have something to actually say. Paradoxically, even with the quoting of many others, no one deserves to be heard; yet, as a member of the human species, the present author wishes to not have a 'voice'.

Pascal, Kierkegaard, Cioran, Vivekananda, Nietzsche, Buber, Heidegger, Tillich, etc. all say the same exact thing within their own idiosyncratic language games. It ought to be considered plagiarism after one goes down the list of names in that each author describes a universal experience that is, seemingly, available to any human consciousness that is willing to participate.

"Sometimes I think that I am right when I agree with all the ancient teachers, at other times I think they are right when they agree with me. I believe in thinking independently. I believe in becoming entirely free from the holy teachers; pay all reverence to them, but look at religion as an independent research. I have to find my light, just as they found theirs. Their finding the light will not satisfy us at all. You have to become the Bible, and not to follow it, excepting as paying reverence to it as a light on the way, as a guidepost, a mark: that is all the value it has." Vivekananda

How is any piece of writing considered 'scholarly'? Moreover, why would any one want to be restricted by the arbitrary characteristics of 'scholarly'? Any person who has written a book, or written down any substantial amount of their own thoughts, and who looks back on these words, and does not wish for everything to be either burned or re-written has become a worthless 'philosopher', not an authentic thinker. Any one who is 'proud' of their work is pathetic. If your work is 'incomprehensible' in style or verbiage, then all the more to it. Reading and 'working out' the author's inner most thoughts is priceless, in comparison to the 'polished' versions we find in 'Academia' today.

"When you know quite absolutely that everything is unreal, you then cannot see why you should take the trouble to prove it." Cioran

The most important, yet elementary, sentiment is this: No one knows what is 'going on here'. What am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going? What is the purpose of existence? And so on. Taken as

‘silly’ questions by most and a ‘game’ for most ‘intellectuals’.

“What astonishes me most is to see that all the world is not astonished at its own weakness. Men act seriously, and each follows his own mode of life, not because it is in fact good to follow since it is the custom, but as if each man knew certainly where reason and justice are.” Pascal

“There is no doubt that creative work is itself done under a compulsion often indistinguishable from a purely clinical obsession. In this sense, what we call a creative gift is merely the social license to be obsessed. And what we call “cultural routine” is a similar license: the proletariat demands the obsession of work in order to keep from going crazy. I used to wonder how people could stand the really demonic activity of working behind those hellish ranges in hotel kitchens, the frantic whirl of waiting on a dozen tables at one time, the madness of the travel agent’s office at the height of the tourist season, or the torture of working with a jack-hammer all day on a hot summer street. The answer is so simple that it eludes us: the craziness of these activities is exactly that of the human condition. They are “right” for us because the alternative is natural desperation. The daily madness of these jobs is a repeated vaccination: against the madness of the asylum. Look at the joy and eagerness with which workers return from vacation to their compulsive routines. They plunge into their work with equanimity and lightheartedness because it drowns out something more ominous. Men have to be protected from reality.” Becker

There are no universal claims besides that of Nihilism (expand upon the ‘universal’ nature of the subjective ‘truth’ of Nihilism, quotes from Kierkegaard, find others). A self-refuting statement? Nihilism exists within paradox and contradiction. One could sum up Nihilism’s paradoxical nature in a sentence: Nihilism is Nothing and therefore Everything. Nihilism is nonrational.

There are only suggestions and observations here. Some who claim the characteristic of ‘authority’ will demand meditation, others will rail against it. Some will claim fasting is a must, others say make sure you eat plenty. Some will claim the natural world is all there is, others will swear that there is an Ultimate Reality. And on and on, everyone spewing a particular nonsense, all proclaiming the ‘path’ or the ‘truth’.

Nihilism as described in these pages is the only ‘truth’ that is and can be ‘known’, rather, experienced, by all humans who participate in the confrontation. There are no ‘paths’ (answers); if there are paths (answers), then there are infinitely many. Anyone who claims any ‘knowledge’ beyond the experience of Nihilism is simply pushing their subjectivity onto you and can be taken or left at one’s discretion.

“If we have broken discursive reason’s power over the question about the nothing and about being, then we have also decided the fate of the dominance of “logic” within philosophy. The very idea of “logic” dissolves in the vortex of a more original inquiry.” Heidegger

“That existence is pervaded by nihilating behavior attests to the permanent and indeed obscured manifestness of no-thing that dread originally discloses. But this means original dread is suppressed for the most part in existence. Dread is there. It’s only napping. Its breath permanently trembles in existence, only slightly in the apprehensive, and inaudibly in the “Uh huh!” and “Húh uh!” of those who are busy;

best of all in the reserved, surest of all at the heart of existence that is daring. But this happens only in those for whom it expends itself in order to preserve the ultimate greatness of existence.” Heidegger

“So then he despairs, that is to say, by a strangely preposterous attitude and a complete mystification with regard to himself, he calls this despair. But to despair is to lose the eternal – and of this he does not speak, does not dream. The loss of the earthly as such is not the cause of despair, and yet it is of this he speaks, and he calls it despairing. What he says is in a certain sense true, only it is not true in the sense in which he understands it; he stands with his face inverted, and what he says must be understood inversely; he stands and points at that which is not a cause of despair, and he declares that he is in despair, and nevertheless it is quite true that despair is going on behind him without his knowing it. It is as if one were to stand with one’s back toward the City Hall and the Court House, and pointing straight before him were to say, “There is the City Hall and the Court House.” The man is right, there it is . . . if he turns around. It is not true, he is not in despair, and yet he is right when he says it. But he calls himself “in despair,” he regards himself as dead, as a shadow of himself. But dead he is not; there is, if you will, life in the characterization. In case everything suddenly changes, everything in the outward circumstances, and the wish is fulfilled, then life enters into him again, immediacy rises again, and he begins to live as fit as a fiddle. But this is the only way immediacy knows how to fight, the one thing it knows how to do: to despair and swoon – and yet it knows what despair is less than anything else. It despairs and swoons, and thereupon it lies quite still as if it were dead, like the childish play of “lying dead”; immediacy is like certain lower animals which have no other weapon or means of defense but to lie quite still and pretend they are dead.” Kierkegaard

Criticisms will be misdirected, necessarily. As the experience of Nihilism is rare, so are pertinent critiques. These are the interpretations of the insights that are produced from the experience of Nihilism. I ask no one to believe in, or adhere to, them. I will report what I experience without censorship. I will ‘unjustifiably’ condemn all of human thought and activity. I will contradict myself, sometimes intentionally and other times for lack of care. If I am perceived as ‘wrong’, and one assumes some sort of ‘worth’ in their criticism, then I believe the quotes used throughout this work will at least show that I am in good company. You are welcome to not read any further.

I don’t believe anything I think or say. There is no seeking of ‘approval’, there is no justification, as I am only the messenger, not the author.

“With regard to a poet people speak of his having a call; but as for becoming a priest, it seems enough to the generality of men (and that means of Christians) that one has taken an examination.” Kierkegaard

“This will seem to some a silly fiction.” Theresa of Avila

These are thoughts discovered within the mystery of existence that will not settle for anything that has so far been spoken by other humans. Nihilism, even with all its ‘glory’, has been the one concept that has been ‘ignored’, superficially fought against, or ignorantly dismissed as unworthy by almost all human beings. You can speak about how life is a ‘mystery’, but do you experience what it is like to be in a mystery? Or do you rather keep busy chasing the phantom of ‘happiness’? What could ever make you

'content' in this world? Contentment within the world is a sign of weakness and sickness, and you're welcome to it. This is for those who are at the brink of madness, suicide, or are already 'dead'.

I want to pursue what will make everyone else uncomfortable. I want to pursue madness. I want to work up the courage for suicide. Why attempt to 'spoil' another's enjoyment, if I do not know what I am talking about, nor do I know the end, assuming there was an end to human existence? I am exhausted from the abrasive 'optimism' that surrounds all human interaction and activity. Existence is a nightmare with a few doses of 'ease' mixed with foolish conceptions of companionship.

There are no, or very few, real philosophers in the world. Would this fact add or subtract to the worthlessness of the world? Ha! True philosophers are like children always asking "Why?". Everyone else is the unthinking robot who either spews their unquestioned, prepackaged 'story of existence', or even better, scolds the child for asking such 'stupid' questions. Like children, philosophers get stripped of their original, Platonic recollection and therefore become trapped within the world as unthinking robots. Ask most 'philosophers' about their ideas, instead of another thinkers, and watch them scramble for words.

"Memory reminds the soul how all earthly joys end, recalling the death of those who lived at ease; how some died suddenly and were soon forgotten, how others, once so prosperous, are now buried beneath the ground and men pass by the graves where they lie, the prey of worms, while the mind recalls many other such incidents." Theresa of Avila

"The questions seemed so foolish, so simple, so childish; but no sooner had I begun my attempt to decide them than I was convinced that they were neither childish nor silly, but were concerned with the deepest problems of life, and again that I was, think of them as I would, utterly unable to find an answer to them." Tolstoy

I would like to think of this work as a 'story' rather than an argument. This work will never be complete, as Nihilism contains no 'solution'.

"There is no way of reaching the infinite." Tillich

Is this work too 'serious'? Is taking Nihilism serious some sort of criticism or defect? Logic? Nihilism dissolves its relevancy. Along with it any discomfort that stems from a meager 'contradiction'. Saint Cecilia was sentenced to death by suffocation in her own bathhouse...she survived. An effort at beheading came as a consequence. Three attempts at her head were taken; she again survived. She died three days later from her wounds, singing all the time songs of praise for God. Can there be any accusation of taking Nihilism too seriously?

"The following is an experiment in nihilism. Already I have contradicted myself! How can one believe in disbelief?" Heisman

"A friend confessed to me that, foreseeing while in the full vigour of physical health the near approach of a violent death, he proposed to concentrate his life and spend the few days which he calculated still remained to him in writing a book. Vanity of vanities!" Unamuno

A prominent cosmologist states that he doesn't very often 'look up' into the universe. Why is he pursuing his knowledge of the universe while behind a desk? He has not questioned what his subjective interest in 'cosmology' is even worth. He has not questioned why 'knowledge' ought to be pursued for its own sake. There is simply a curiosity that is slavishly driving him forward on a path that itself is not questioned.

"When I fancied that I stood alone I was really in the ridiculous position of being backed up by all Christendom. It may be, Heaven forgive me, that I did try to be original; but I only succeeded in inventing all by myself an inferior copy of the existing traditions of civilized religion. The man from the yacht thought he was the first to find England; I thought I was the first to find Europe. I did try to found a heresy of my own; and when I had put the last touches to it, I discovered that it was orthodoxy." Chesterton

"You certainly have command of elegant and excellent similitudes, and sentiments: but, when you are engaged in sacred discussions, you apply them childishly, nay, pervertedly: for you crawl upon the ground, and enter in thought into nothing above what is human." Luther

"One method, which everyone knows, is very common, and that is: 'It may be very true, but do not think of it. 'Make hay while the sun shines,' as the proverb says. It is all true, it is a fact, but do not mind it. Seize the few pleasures you can, do what little you can, do not look at the dark side of the picture, but always towards the hopeful, the positive side.'...It is put forward in the strongest way at the present time; but it fails, as it always must fail. We cannot hide a carrion with roses; it is impossible. It would not avail long; for soon the roses would fade, and the carrion would be worse than ever before. So with our lives. We may try to cover our old and festering sores with cloth of gold, but there comes a day when the cloth of gold is removed, and the sore in all its ugliness is revealed." Vivekananda

"This is the voice that is leading us forward. Man has heard it, and is hearing it all through the ages. This voice comes to men when everything seems to be lost and hope has fled, when man's dependence on his own strength has been crushed down and everything seems to melt away between his fingers, and life is a hopeless ruin. Then he hears it. This is called religion." Vivekananda. **(The 'Indefinite' voice, compare to Heidegger)**

I feel that I should be writing something, but I have nothing to say.

"This simple observation has nothing to do with cultural pessimism—nor with any optimism either, of course; for the darkening of the world, the flight of the gods, the destruction of the earth, the reduction of human beings to a mass, the hatred and mistrust of everything creative and free has already reached such proportions throughout the whole earth that such childish categories as pessimism and optimism have long become laughable." Heidegger

With this absurd endeavor of description before us, with its supposed 'clarification' of things that are beyond the scope of human comprehension, we are left stagnant in the realm of suggestion, with the smallest of possibilities that we will be able to *leave*, having poisoned the well.

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## Extra Notes and Quotes

look at Journal 11/12- thoughts about the laughing at children who ask 'Why?' questions.

"The more thoroughly reflected the despair is, the more rarely it occurs in the world. But this proves that most men have not become very deep even in despair; it by no means proves, however, that they are not in despair. There are very few men who live even only passably in the category of spirit; yea, there are not many even who merely make an attempt at this life, and most of those who do so, shy away. They have not learned to fear, they have not learned what "must" means, regardless, infinitely regardless of what it may be that comes to pass. Therefore they cannot endure what even to them seems a contradiction, and which as reflected from the world around them appears much more glaring, that to be concerned for one's own soul and to want to be spirit is a waste of time, yes, an inexcusable waste of time, which ought if possible to be punishable by law, at all events is punished by contempt and ridicule as a sort of treason against men, as a froward madness which crazily fills up time with nothing. Then there is a period in their lives (alas, their best period) when they begin after all to take the inward direction. They get about as far as the first difficulties, there they veer away; it seems to them as though this road were leading to a disconsolate desert... This despair, as I have said, is the commonest, it is so common that only thereby can one explain the rather common opinion in common intercourse that despair is something belonging to youth, which appears only in youthful years, but is not to be found in the settled man who has come to the age of maturity and the years of wisdom. This is a desperate error, or rather a desperate mistake, which overlooks (yes, and what is worse, it overlooks the fact that what it overlooks is pretty nearly the best thing that can be said of a man, since far worse often occurs) – it overlooks the fact that the majority of men do never really manage in their whole life to be more than they were in childhood and youth, namely, immediacy with the addition of a little dose of self-reflection." Kierkegaard  
(get Vivekananda's quote from *Journal* that talks about how he thinks their his ideas sometimes, and other people's other times; and the subjectivity of Nihilism's interpretation)

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## Immortality-

"Such a "heaven" is the fruit of a union of Christian terminology with ordinary worldliness, and it is convincing to no one who realizes that compromise in such ultimate matters is impossible; neither the true Orthodox Christian nor the consistent Nihilist is seduced by it." Seraphim (get quotes from Tillich and Vivekananda about 'immortality' and put it in the mysticism section)

"even though belief in eternity is necessary as historical man's unique consolation, the catastrophic ending of this tragedy of life and of man in particular will demonstrate the illusion of such naïve faith." Cioran  
"The anxiety of fate and death is most basic, most universal, and inescapable. All attempts to argue it away are futile. Even if the so-called arguments for the 'immortality of the soul' had argumentative power



(which they do not have) they would not convince existentially...The popular belief in immortality...it does this by continuing one's finitude, that is one's having to die, infinitely, so that the actual death will never occur. This, however, is an illusion and, logically speaking, a contradiction in terms. It makes endless what, by definition, must come to an end. The 'immortality of the soul' is a poor symbol for the courage to be in the face of one's having to die."

"Living in heaven would not be very different from life in this world. At best, it would only be a very healthy rich man's life, with plenty of sense-enjoyments and a sound body which knows no disease. It would be this material world, only a little more refined; and we have seen the difficulty that the external material world can never solve the problem. So no heaven can solve the problem...If we had a heaven like that desired by those to whom sense-enjoyment is the very end of existence, then we would not progress. That would be the most terrible curse we could pronounce on the soul. Is this all we can come to? A little weeping and dancing, and then to die like a dog! What a curse you pronounce on the head of humanity when you long for these things! That is what you do when you cry after the joys of this world, for you do not know what true joy is. What philosophy insists on is not to give up joys, but to know what joy really is. The Norwegian heaven is a tremendous fighting place where they all sit before Odin; they have a wild boar hunt, and then they go to war and slash each other to pieces. But in some way or other, after a few hours of such fighting, the wounds are all healed up, and they go into a hall where the boar has been roasted, and have a carousal. And then the wild boar takes form again, ready to be hunted the next day. That is much the same thing as our heaven, not a whit worse, only our ideas may be a little more refined."

Vivekananda

"For if nothingness be the center of the world, then the world, both in its essence and in every detail, is incoherent, it fails to hold together, it is absurd." Seraphim

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## Quotes about the Universal nature of Nihilism-

"...one might say perhaps that there lives not one single man who after all is not to some extent in despair, in whose inmost parts there does not dwell a disquietude, a perturbation, a discord, an anxious dread of an unknown something, or of a something he does not even dare to make acquaintance with, dread of a possibility of life, or dread of himself. At any rate there has lived no one and there lives no one outside of Christendom who is not in despair, and no one in Christendom, unless he be a true Christian, and if he is not quite that, he is somewhat in despair after all." Kierkegaard

"...every such existence, whatever it accomplishes, though it be the most amazing exploit, whatever it explains, though it were the whole of existence, however intensely it enjoys life aesthetically – every such existence is after all despair." Kierkegaard

Simple Salvation (mention some aspects in preface, e.g.) "The narrow-mindedness of the natural man cannot welcome for itself the extraordinary which God has intended for him; so he is offended."

Kierkegaard

"And yet such a despairer, whose only wish is this most crazy of all transformations, loves to think that this change might be accomplished as easily as changing a coat." Kierkegaard

"With regard to a poet people speak of his having a call; but as for becoming a priest, it seems enough to the generality of men (and that means of Christians) that one has taken an examination." Kierkegaard

(don't worry about my credentials, anonymity)

"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." Schopenhauer

"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?" James (Section of Suicide, not about the worldly, the human, the finite) "When the discoveries of possibility are honestly administered, possibility will discover all finitudes but idealize them in the shape of infinity, in anxiety overwhelm the individual, until the individual again overcomes them in the anticipation of faith. *What I say here may to many seem obscure and foolish talk, since they pride themselves on never having been in anxiety. To this I would reply that one should certainly not be in anxiety about persons, about finitudes; only someone who passes through the anxiety of the possible is cultivated to have no anxiety, not because this person can escape the terrible things of life, but because these always become weak by comparison with those of possibility.* If, on the other hand, the speaker maintains that the great thing about him is that he has never been in anxiety, I will gladly provide him with my explanation: that it comes from his being very spiritless." Kierkegaard  
Why take Nihilism seriously? Why take 'suffering', a subjective experience, seriously? One cannot, I cannot. Which is why I will never show my writings, show my thoughts...worthless.

(This is perfect for Naturalism Section? How does one lean on God and give over everything to Him and still stand on his own feet as a passionate human being? These are not rhetorical questions, they are real ones that go right to the heart of the problem of 'how to be a man' - a problem that no one can satisfactorily n) "How, in other words, can one be a saint and still organize scientific movements of world-historical importance advise anyone else on, as the wise William James knew. The whole thing is loaded with ambiguity impossible to resolve." Becker

(This could be in Language or Mysticism Section) "The real work of religion must be one's own concern. I have an idea of my own, I must keep it sacred and secret, because I know that it need not be your idea. Secondly, why should I create a disturbance by wanting to tell everyone what my idea is? Other people would come and fight me. They cannot do so if I do not tell them; but if I go about telling them what my ideas are, they will all oppose me. So what is the use of talking about them? This Ishta should be kept secret, it is between you and God." Vivekananda