

Journal314 Part III, 11-19

11. Martin Luther
12. Thomas Merton
13. Meister Eckhart
14. Plato/Socrates
15. William Lane Craig
16. Bertrand Russell
17. Albert Camus
18. Emil Cioran
19. Blaise Pascal

#anthology , #314quotes

11. Martin Luther

"God forbid! Even if God were to offer me paradise in order that I might last forty more years in this life, I wouldn't want it. I'd rather hire a hangman to knock my head off. That's how bad the world is now. It's full of nothing but devils, so that one can't with anything better than a blessed end and to get away. Nor do I bother with physicians." (Ha! This is from 'Table Talk')

(me: Works are not condemned, but devalued because they are Earthly. The only thing that matters is not of this earth, is not of this Kingdom, God, faith in God, contemplation, non-movement, pacifism, renouncement of the Earthly for the Other, etc.)

-*"The more Christian a man is, the more evils, sufferings, and deaths he must endure..."* -*"Therefore the moment you begin to have faith you learn that all things in you are altogether blameworthy, sinful, and damnable..."* this is why prayer, rituals, ceremonies are not to be fought over, they are not to be "risen up" higher than what they are meant to be, they are meant to be a way to appreciate/possibly experience the Other. (me- he put everything on Jesus, he wasn't a pluralist. He didn't have access to the diverse/similar opinions of the divine in a truly "open-minded" way.)

-*Bondage of the Will* – (me- Luther has to 'diminish' free will since anything to do with free will is necessarily Earthly, and God, or the Other, is not only valuable, but the Ground of all Value. He pushes a rejection of self, for some form of unity between the Self and God)

-*"Therefore, it is not irreligious, curious, or superfluous, but essentially wholesome and necessary, for a Christian to know, whether or not the will does any thing in those things which pertain unto Salvation. Nay, let me tell you, this is the very hinge upon which our discussion turns. It is the very heart of our subject. For our object is this: to inquire what "Free-will" can do, in what it is passive, and how it stands with reference to the grace of God. If we know nothing of these things, we shall know nothing whatever of Christian matters, and shall be far behind all People upon the earth. He that does not feel this, let him confess that he is no Christian. And he that despises and laughs at it, let him know that he is the Christian's greatest enemy. For, if I know not how much I can do myself, how far my ability extends, and what I can do God-wards; I shall be equally uncertain and ignorant how much God is to*

do, how far His ability is to extend, and what He is to do toward me: whereas it is "God that worketh all in all." (1 Cor. Xii. 6.) -"THIS, therefore, is also essentially necessary and wholesome for Christians to know: *That God foreknows nothing by contingency, but that He foresees, purposes, and does all things according to His immutable, eternal, and infallible will.* By this thunderbolt, "Free-will" is thrown prostrate, and utterly dashed to pieces. Those, therefore, who would assert "Free-will," must either deny this thunderbolt, or pretend not to see it, or push it from them."

-“Unless we are to suppose that if I should at any time be taken and cast into a prison or a sink, (which has happened to many saints,) I could not there call upon God, or believe that He was present with me, until I should come into some ornamented church. If you teach us that we are thus to trifle concerning God, and if you are thus offended at the places of His essential presence, by and by you will not even allow that He dwells with us in Heaven.”

-“For, by the grace of God, I am not so great a fool or madman, as to have desired to sustain and defend this cause so long, with so much fortitude and so much firmness, (which you call obstinacy) in the face of so many dangers of my life, so much hatred, so many traps laid for me; in a word, in the face of the fury of men and devils—I have not done this for money, for that I neither have nor desire; nor for vain-glory, for that, if I wished, I could not obtain in a world so enraged against me, nor for the life for my body, for that cannot be made sure of for an hour.—Do you think, then, that you only have a heart that is moved by these tumults? Yet, I am not made of stone, nor was I born from the Marpesian rocks. But since it cannot be otherwise, I choose rather to be battered in temporal tumult, happy in the grace of God, for God's word's sake, which is to be maintained with a mind incorrupt and invincible, than to be ground to powder in eternal tumult, under the wrath of God and torments intolerable! May Christ grant, what I desire and hope, that your heart may not be such—but certainly your words imply, that, with Epicurus, you consider the Word of God and a future life, to be mere fables. For, in your instructions, you would have us, for the sake of the Popes, the heads, and the peace of the community, to put off, upon an occasion, and depart from the all-certain word of God: whereas, if we put off that, we put off God, faith, salvation and all Christianity together. *How far different from this is the instruction of Christ: that, we should rather despise the whole world!*”

-“As though He had said, multitude, height, wealth, power, wisdom, righteousness, and whatever is great in the world, sets itself against the word of God.”

-“But now the Gospel is come, men begin to impute unto it, that the world is evil. Whereas, the truth is, that by the good Gospel, it is more manifest how evil it was, while, without the Gospel, it did all its works in darkness.”

-“First, God has promised certainly His grace to the humbled: that is, to the self-deploring and despairing. But a man cannot be thoroughly humbled, until he comes to know that his salvation is utterly beyond his own powers, counsel, endeavours, will, and works, and absolutely depending on the will, counsel, pleasure, and work of another, that is, of God only.”

-“Thus, when God makes alive, He does it by killing; when He justifies, He does it by bringing in guilty: when He exalts to Heaven, He does it by bringing down to hell: as the Scripture saith, "The Lord killeth and maketh alive, He bringeth down to the grave and raiseth up, " (I Sam. ii. 6.); concerning which, there is no need that I should here speak more at large, for those who read my writings, are well acquainted with these things. Thus He conceals His eternal mercy and loving-kindness behind His eternal wrath: His righteousness, behind apparent iniquity.”

-“This is the highest degree of faith—to believe that He is merciful, who saves so few and damns so many; to believe Him just, who according to His own will, makes us necessarily damnable, that He may seem, as Erasmus says, 'to delight in the torments of the miserable, and to be an object of hatred rather than of love.' If, therefore, I could by any means comprehend how that same God can be merciful and just, who carries the appearance of so much wrath and iniquity, there would be no need of faith.”

-“You make the power of "Free-will" to be—'that certain small degree of power, which, without the grace of God, is utterly ineffective.' Do you not acknowledge this?—Now then, I ask and demand of you, if the grace of God be wanting, or, if it be taken away from that certain small degree of power, what can it do of itself? 'It is ineffective (you say) and can do nothing of good...without the grace of God, it is ineffective.' *Great Earthly/Other distinction/conclusion-* But, if we do not like to leave out this term altogether, (which would be most safe, and also most religious) *we may, nevertheless, with a good conscience teach, that it be used so far as to allow man a "Free-will," not in respect of those which are above him, but in respect only of those things which are below him: that is, he may be allowed to know, that he has, as to his goods and possessions the right of using, acting, and omitting, according to his "Free-will;" although, at the same time, that same "Free-will" is overruled by the Free-will of God alone, just as He pleases: but that, God-ward, or in things which pertain unto salvation or damnation, he has no "Free-will," but is a captive, slave, and servant, either to the will of God, or to the will of Satan.*”

-“What is this else but saying, that "Free-will," or the human heart, is so bound by the power of Satan, that, unless it be quickened up in a wonderful way by the Spirit of God, it cannot of itself see or hear those things which strike against the eyes and ears so manifestly, as to be as it were palpable by the hand? So great is the misery and blindness of the human race!”

-“...how it could be that the Jews were not won over by the works and words of Christ, which were evidently incontrovertible and undeniable, satisfied themselves from that place of the Scripture, where it is shewn, that man, left to himself, seeing seeth not, and hearing heareth not. And what can be more monstrous! "The light (saith Christ) shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not." (John i. 5.) Who could believe this? Who hath heard the like—that *the light should shine in darkness, and yet, the darkness still remain darkness, and not be enlightened!*”

-“Wherefore, it is no wonder in divine things, that through so many ages, men renowned for talent remained blind. It might have been a wonder in human things, but in divine things, it would rather have been a wonder if there had been one here and there that did not remain blind: that they all remained utterly blind alike, is no wonder at all. For what is the whole human race together, without the Spirit, but the kingdom of the devil (as I have said) and a confused chaos of darkness?”, “For in this way, I will make it appear, that a stone, or a log of wood has "Freewill," because it can go upwards and downwards; although, by its own power, it can go only downwards, but can go upwards only by the help of another. And, as I said before, by meaning at the same time the thing itself, and also something else which may be joined with it or added to it, I will say, consistently with the use of all words and languages—*all men are no man, and all things are nothing!*”, “*...an ungodly man, like Satan his prince, is wholly turned to self and to his own. He does not seek God, nor care for the things of God: he seeks his own riches, and glory, and works, and wisdom, and power, and sovereignty in everything, and wants to enjoy it in peace...He condemns those desires of glory, wealth, wisdom, righteousness of one's own, and all the things in which the world trusts.*”

- "As though He had said, multitude, height, wealth, power, wisdom, righteousness, and whatever is great in the world, sets itself against the word of God."
 - "But how much better is it to lose the whole world, than to lose God the Creator of the world, who can create innumerable worlds again, and is better than infinite worlds? For what are temporal things when compared with eternal? *This leprosy of temporal things*, therefore, is rather to be borne, than that every soul should be destroyed and eternally damned, and the world kept in peace, and preserved from these tumults, by their blood and perdition: whereas, one soul cannot be redeemed with the price of the whole world!"
 - *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. Whereas, those things which God works, are neither puerile, civil, nor human, but divine; and they exceed human capacity."*
 - "Therefore, the Word of God, and the traditions of men, are opposed to each other with implacable discord; no less so, than God Himself and Satan; who each destroy the works and overthrow the doctrines of the other, as regal kings each destroying the kingdom of the other."
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12. Thomas Merton

"The truly sacred attitude toward life is in no sense an escape from the sense of nothingness that assails us when we are left alone with ourselves. On the contrary, it penetrates into that darkness and that nothingness, realizing that the mercy of God has transformed our nothingness into His temple and believing that in our darkness His light has hidden itself. *Hence the sacred attitude is one which does not recoil from our own inner emptiness, but rather penetrates it with awe and reverence, and with the awareness of mystery. This is a most important discovery in, the interior life.*"

Spiritual Direction and Meditation

- "A contemplative is not one who takes his prayer seriously, but one who takes God seriously, who is famished for truth, who seeks to live in generous simplicity, in the spirit." (me- true humility is isolation with God)
- "Meditation is for those who are not satisfied with a merely objective and conceptual knowledge about life, about God— about ultimate realities. They want to enter into an intimate contact with truth itself, with God. They want to experience the deepest realities of life by living them. Meditation is the means to that end."
- "a person would be wasting his time if he thought reasoning alone could satisfy the need of his soul for spiritual meditation. Meditation is not merely a matter of "thinking things out," even if that leads to a good ethical resolution. Meditation is more than mere practical thinking."
- "This is especially true in our own time when the intellectual and moral flabbiness of a materialistic society has robbed man's nature of its spiritual energy and tone. Nevertheless, the necessity for discipline does not imply the obligation for all men to follow one identical and rigid system."

- "If our mental vision of God and of the way to God tends to lose its sharp outlines in the "cloud of unknowing," there should never be any real confusion as to the object we are seeking: union with God."

- "Here is the principle. All the members of the Mystical Body of Christ have, in actual fact, the divine life of Christ within them and are "mystically" identified with Him in a broad sense of the word...The identification which we seek to effect in mental prayer is therefore a conscious realization of the union that is already truly effected between our souls and God by grace." (me- Vivekananda)

- "This is a grace which, though quite normal in the spiritual life, is not shared by all. But even those who do not have this particular attraction ought to realize that the function of their mental prayer is to bring them somehow into conscious communion with the God who is the source of their natural and supernatural life and the principle of all the good that is in them."

- "In order to meditate, I have to withdraw my mind from all that prevents me from attending to God present in my heart. This is impossible unless I recollect my senses. But it is almost useless to try to recollect myself at the moment of prayer if I have allowed my senses and imagination to run wild all the rest of the day. Consequently the desire to practice meditation implies the effort to preserve moderate recollection throughout the day. It means living in an atmosphere of faith and with occasional moments of prayer and attention to God. The world in which we live today presents a tantalizing problem to anyone who wants to acquire habits of recollection. The price of true recollection is a firm resolve to take no wilful interest in anything that is not useful or necessary to our interior life. The world we live in assails us on every side with useless appeals to emotion and to sense appetite. Radios, newspapers, movies, television, billboards, neon-signs surround us with a perpetual incitement to pour out our money and our vital energies in futile transitory satisfactions. The more we buy the more they urge us to buy. But the more they advertise the less we get. And yet, the more they advertise the more we buy. Eventually all will consist in the noise that is made and there will be no satisfaction left in the world except that of vain hopes and anticipations that can never be fulfilled. I say this in order to show that very much of what we read in magazines or newspapers or see and hear in movies or elsewhere, is completely useless from every point of view. The first thing I must do if I want to practice meditation is to develop a strong resistance to the futile appeals which modern society makes to my five senses. *Hence I will have to mortify my desires. I do not speak here of extraordinary ascetic practices; merely of self-denial required to live by the standards of reason and of the Gospels. In present-day America, such self-denial is apt to require heroism. In practice it may mean giving up many or most of the luxuries which I have come to regard as necessities, at least until I have acquired sufficient self-control to use these things without being enslaved by them.*"

- "...God is infinitely above us, although He is within us and is the principle of our being."

- "We have to enter into our meditation with a realization of our spiritual poverty, our complete lack of the things we seek, and of our abject nothingness in the sight of the infinite God."

- "The Fathers of the Church saw that every one of us is more or less like the Prodigal, starving in a distant land, far from our Father's House. This is the common condition of mankind exiled from God and from Paradise by an inordinate preoccupation with perishing things and by a constant inclination to self-gratification and sin."

- "The saints are, as a matter of fact, much more keenly aware of the gulf between themselves and God than are those who live always on the periphery of sin."

- "Habitual self-complacency is almost always a sign of spiritual stagnation. The complacent no longer feel in themselves any real indigence, any urgent need for God. Their meditations are comfortable, reassuring and inconclusive. Their mental prayer quickly degenerates into day-dreaming, distractions or plain undisguised sleep. For this reason trials and temptations can prove to be a real blessing in the life of prayer, simply because they force us to pray. It is when we begin to find out our need for God that we first learn how to make a real meditation." (me- Cobra is at the door, head is held underwater/I want air')

- "It is usually better to remain quiet, to be still. But there is no reason why one should not also meditate walking up and down in a garden. In short, there is an almost infinite variety of places and positions that can be adopted in mental prayer. They are all accidental. The most important thing is to seek silence, tranquillity, recollection and peace."

- "Without making any distinction between fruitful and sterile leisure, these busy-bodies condemn all desire for leisure as a sin. They believe that a man who is not always on the move is wasting precious time."

- "We cannot give ourselves to spiritual things if we are always swept off our feet by a multitude of external activities. Business is not the supreme virtue, and sanctity is not measured by the amount of work we accomplish. Perfection is found in the purity of our love for God, and this pure love is a delicate plant that grows best where there is plenty of time for it to mature."

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- "St. Therese of Lisieux wisely reminds us that "God has no need of our works: He has need of our love." The ideal of the contemplative life is not, however, the exclusion of all work. On the contrary, total inactivity would stultify the interior life just as much as too much activity. The true contemplative is one who has discovered the art of finding leisure even in the midst of his work, by working with such a spirit of detachment and recollection that even his work is a prayer."

- "Compunction is simply an awareness of our indigence and coldness and of our need for God. It implies faith, sorrow, humility and above all hope in the mercy of God. For the man without compunction, prayer is a cold formality in which he remains centered on himself. For the man who has a sense of compunction, prayer is a living act which brings him face to face with God in an I-Thou relationship which is not imaginary but real, spiritual and personal; and the basis of this reality is our sense of our need for God, united with faith in His love for us."

- "a concentration of the interior life on one objective, union with God. We have remarked that this objective is usually obscure to our experience. The desire for God becomes more intense and more continual, and at the same time our knowledge of Him, rising above precise and definite concepts, becomes "dark" and even confused. Hence the anguish of the mystic who seeks God in the night of pure faith, above the level of human ideas, knowing Him not by light but by darkness."

- "Meditation makes use of definite theological and philosophical ideas of God. It deals with ideas and principles which, when the soul is enlightened by faith and moved to action by charity, bear fruit in deep supernatural convictions."

- "...the real function of meditation is to enable us to realize and to actualize in our own experience the fundamental truths of our faith. But there are other subjects for meditation. Our own life, our own experience, our own duties and difficulties, naturally enter into our meditations. Actually, a lot of "distractions" would vanish if we realized that we are not bound at all times to ignore the practical problems of our life when we are at prayer. On the contrary, sometimes these problems actually ought to be the subject of meditation. After all, we have to meditate on our vocation, on our response to God's will in our regard, on our charity towards other people, on our fidelity to grace. This enters into our meditations on Christ and His life; for He desires and intends to live in us. The Christ-life has, as its most important aspect for each of us, His actual presence and activity in our own lives. Meditation that ignores this truth easily tends to be aimless and confused."

- *"In order to understand even the trivial events of our own lives, we need to create a religious perspective in which to view everything that happens. This perspective demands first of all that we frequently renew the realization of the fact that we must die and that our life must pass through the inexorable light of judgment. One who never thinks of the hour of his death cannot make really spiritual decisions during his life. He will never be anything more than a short-sighted opportunist whose decisions will have no lasting value."*

- "All the ancient philosophies and all the higher forms of religious thought have made use of parables and simple imaginative figures to convey the deepest truths, and nowhere is this more true than in the Bible. Here God has revealed to us His mysteries with a graphic simplicity and concreteness which makes them accessible to every race and century. (me- Tillich)

13. Meister Eckhart

- "Only he knows God who recognizes that all creatures are nothingness."

- "The second means of attraction which he used is Emptiness...Jesus Christ made Himself empty that he might wisely draw all things to Himself."

- "To be full of things is to be empty of God. To be empty of things is to be full of God." - "Therefore deadly sin is a breach of nature, a death of the soul, a disquiet of the heart, a weakening of power, a blindness of the sense, a sorrow of the spirit, a death of grace, a death of virtue, *a death of good works*, an aberration of the spirit, a fellowship with the devil, an expulsion of Christianity, a dungeon of hell, a banquet of hell, an eternity of hell."

- "Deadly sin is also a disquiet of the heart, for everything rests nowhere except in its own proper place; and the proper resting-place of the soul is nowhere except in God as St Augustine saith..." - "All that is created is nothing, all far from and foreign to the soul."

- "The man who abides in God's love must be dead to himself and all created things, and regard himself as a mere unit among a thousand million. *Such a man must renounce himself and all the world.*"

- The man who is wholly sanctified is so drawn towards the Eternal, that no transitory thing may move him, no corporeal thing affect him, no earthly thing attract him."

- "Now the question arises *what is sanctification*, since it has so lofty a rank. Thou shouldest know that real sanctification consists in this that the spirit remain as immovable and unaffected by all impact of

love or hate, joy or sorrow, honour or shame, as a huge mountain is unstirred by a gentle breeze. This immovable sanctification causes man to attain the nearest likeness to God that he is capable of. God's very essence consists of His immovable sanctity..."

- "The chief agent in this is grace, because grace draws men from the transitory and purifies them from the earthly. And thou shouldest know that to be empty of all creature's love is to be full of God, and to be full of creature-love is to be empty of God."

- "God has remained from everlasting in immovable sanctity, and still remains so. When He created heaven and earth and all creatures, His sanctity was as little affected thereby as though He had created nothing. I say further: God's sanctity is as little affected by men's good works and prayers, as though they had accomplished none, and He is by those means no more favourably inclined towards men than if they ceased praying and working."

- "Here, thou shouldest know that in every man are two kinds of men, the outer and the inner man. Every man, who loves God, only uses his outer senses so far as is absolutely necessary; he takes care that they do not drag him down to the level of the beasts, as they do some who might rather be termed beasts than men. The soul of the spiritual man whom God moves to love Him with all his powers concentrates all its forces on the inner man. Therefore He saith, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." Now, there are some who waste the powers of the soul for the use of the outer man; these are they who turn all their thoughts and desires towards transitory things, and know nothing of the inner life. But a good man sometimes deprives his outer man of all power that it may have a higher object, while sensualists deprive the inner man of all power to use it for the outer man."

- "'What is the object of this immovable sanctity?" I answer, "Nothing"

- "For this we may take the following illustration: if we bake in one oven three loaves of barley-bread, of rye-bread, and of wheat, we shall find the same heat of the oven affects them differently; when one is well-baked, another will be still raw, and another yet more raw. That is not due to the heat, but to the variety of the materials. Similarly God works in all hearts not alike but in proportion as He finds them prepared and susceptible. If the heart is to be ready for the highest, it must be vacant of all other things. If I wish to write on a white tablet, whatever else is written on the tablet, however noble its purport, is a hindrance to me. If I am to write, I must wipe the tablet clean of everything, and the tablet is most suitable for my purpose when it is blank. Similarly, if God is to write on my heart, everything else must come out of it till it is really sanctified. Only so can God work His highest will, and so the sanctified heart has no outward object at all."

- "The question arises: But what then does the sanctified heart pray for? I answer that when truly sanctified, it prays for nothing, for whosoever prays asks God to give him some good, or to take some evil from him. But the sanctified heart desires nothing, and contains nothing that it wishes to be freed from. Therefore it is free of all want except that it wants to be like God. St Dionysius commenting on the text, "Know ye not that all run, but one receiveth the prize?" says "this running is nothing else than a turning away from all creatures and being united to the Uncreated."

- "*St Augustine says. "the strong attraction of the soul to the Divine reduces everything to nothingness: on earth this attraction is manifested as sanctification. When this process has reached its culminating point, knowledge becomes ignorance, desire indifference and light darkness."*

- "No bodily and fleshly delight can ever take place without spiritual loss, for the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh."

- *"The quickest means to bring us to perfection is suffering; none enjoy everlasting blessedness more than those who share with Christ the bitterest pangs. Nothing is sharper than suffering, nothing is sweeter than to have suffered. The surest foundation in which this perfection may rest is humility; whatever here crawls in the deepest abjectness, that the Spirit lifts to the very heights of God, for love brings suffering and suffering brings love."*
 - *"Ways of living are many; one lives thus, and another thus; but whosoever will reach the highest life, let him in a few words hear the conclusion of the whole matter: keep thyself clear of all men, keep thyself from all imaginations that crowd upon the mind, free thyself from all that is contingent, entangling, and cumbersome and direct thy mind always to gazing upon God in thy heart with a steadfast look that never wavers: as for other spiritual exercises--fasting, watching and prayer--direct them all to this one end, and practice them so far as they may be helpful thereto, so wilt thou win to perfection."*
 - *"The aim of man is not outward holiness by works, but life in God, yet this last expresses itself in works of love."*
 - *"The moral task of man is a process of spiritualization. All creatures are go-betweens, and we are placed in time that by diligence in spiritual business we may grow liker and nearer to God. The aim of man is beyond the temporal--in the serene region of the everlasting Present."*
 - *"The merely temporal life in itself is a negation of real being, because it depends on itself and not on the deepest foundation of life; therefore also natural love is cramped finite and defective."*
 - *"The love of the Cross must swallow up our personal grief."*
 - *"...he who sorrows most is the noblest...Sorrow is the root of all virtue."*
 - *"This passage from nothingness to real being, this quitting of oneself is a birth accompanied by pain, for by it natural love is excluded. All grief except grief for sin comes from love of the world."*
 - *"The right fear is the fear of losing God."*
 - *"God brings forth His Son in thee, whether thou likest it or not, whether thou sleepest or wakest; God worketh His own will. That man is unaware of it, is man's fault, for his taste is so spoilt by feeding on earthly things that he cannot relish God's love." (Kierkegaard)*
 - *"He is the end of all creation. This end is concealed in the darkness of the everlasting Godhead, and is unknown, and never was known, and never will be known. God Himself remains unknown; the light of the everlasting Father shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not."*
 - *"Three things hinder us from hearing the everlasting Word. The first is fleshliness, the second is distraction, the third is the illusion of time. If a man could get free of these, he would dwell in eternity, and in the spirit, and in solitude, and in the desert, and there would hear the everlasting word. Our Lord saith: 'No man can hear My word nor my teaching without renouncing himself.'"*
 - *"God is equally near in all creatures."*
 - *"To serve God with fear is good; to serve Him out of love is better; but to fear and love Him together is best of all."*
 - *"He knows God rightly who knows Him everywhere."*
 - *"Therefore, if the soul is to know God, it must know Him outside time and place, since God is neither in this or that, but One and above them. If the soul is to see God, it must look at nothing in time; for while the soul is occupied with time or place or any image of the kind, it cannot recognize God."*
 - *"God is always ready, but we are very unready."*
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14. Plato/Socrates

- Allegory of the Cave: "And now look again, and see what will naturally follow if the prisoners are released and disabused of their error. At first, when any of them is liberated and compelled suddenly to stand up and turn his neck round and walk and look towards the light, he will suffer sharp pains; the glare will distress him, and he will be unable to see the realities of which in his former state he had seen the shadows; and then conceive some one saying to him, that what he saw before was an illusion, but that now, when he is approaching nearer to being and his eye is turned towards more real existence, he has a clearer vision,— what will be his reply? And you may further imagine that his instructor is pointing to the objects as they pass and requiring him to name them,— will he not be perplexed? Will he not fancy that the shadows which he formerly saw are truer than the objects which are now shown to him?...And if he is compelled to look straight at the light, will he not have a pain in his eyes which will make him turn away to take refuge in the objects of vision which he can see, and which he will conceive to be in reality clearer than the things which are now being shown to him?...And if there were a contest, and he had to compete in measuring the shadows with the prisoners who had never moved out of the den, while his sight was still weak, and before his eyes had become steady (and the time which would be needed to acquire this new habit of sight might be very considerable), would he not be ridiculous? Men would say of him that up he went and down he came without his eyes; and that it was better not even to think of ascending; and if any one tried to loose another and lead him up to the light, let them only catch the offender, and they would put him to death.
- "This entire allegory, I said, you may now append, dear Glaucon, to the previous argument; the prison-house is the world of sight, the light of the fire is the sun, and you will not misapprehend me if you interpret the journey upwards to be the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world according to my poor belief, which, at your desire, I have expressed— whether rightly or wrongly God knows. But, whether true or false, my opinion is that in the world of knowledge *the idea of good appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort*; and, when seen, is also inferred to be the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and of the lord of light in this visible world, and the immediate source of reason and truth in the intellectual; and that this is the power upon which he who would act rationally either in public or private." (Simple Salvation, participation is needed)
- "Moreover, I said, you must not wonder that those who attain to this beatific vision are unwilling to descend to human affairs; for their souls are ever hastening into the upper world where they desire to dwell; which desire of theirs is very natural, if our allegory may be trusted."
- "...in the world of knowledge the idea of good appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort; and, when seen, is also inferred to be the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and of the lord of light in this visible world, and the immediate source of reason and truth in the intellectual; and that this is the power upon which he who would act rationally either in public or private life must have his eye fixed."
- "And is there anything surprising in one who passes from divine contemplations to the evil state of man, misbehaving himself in a ridiculous manner; if, while his eyes are blinking and before he has become accustomed to the surrounding darkness, he is compelled to fight in courts of law, or in other

places, about the images or the shadows of images of justice, and is endeavouring to meet the conceptions of those who have never yet seen absolute justice?"

- "Any one who has common sense will remember that the bewilderments of the eyes are of two kinds, and arise from two causes, either from coming out of the light or from going into the light, which is true of the mind's eye, quite as much as of the bodily eye; and he who remembers this when he sees any one whose vision is perplexed and weak, will not be too ready to laugh; he will first ask whether that soul of man has come out of the brighter life, and *is unable to see because unaccustomed to the dark, or having turned from darkness to the day is dazzled by excess of light*. And he will count the one happy in his condition and state of being, and he will pity the other; or, if he have a mind to laugh at the soul which comes from below into the light, there will be more reason in this than in the laugh which greets him who returns from above out of the light into the den."

- "...our argument shows that the power and capacity of learning exists in the soul already..." (Like Luther, Tolstoy, Jesus 'holy spirit', etc)

- "But what if there had been a circumcision of such natures in the days of their youth; and they *had been severed from those sensual pleasures*, such as eating and drinking, which, like leaden weights, were attached to them at their birth, and which *drag them down and turn the vision of their souls upon the things that are below*— if, I say, they had been released from these impediments and turned in the opposite direction, the very same faculty in them would have seen the truth as keenly as they see what their eyes are turned to now."

- "And the only life which looks down upon the life of political ambition is that of true philosophy. Do you know of any other?"

- "...the turning round of a soul passing from a day which is little better than night to the true day of being, that is, the ascent from below, which we affirm to be true philosophy?"

- "But the simple truth is, O Athenians, that I have nothing to do with physical speculations."

- "When I began to talk with him, I could not help thinking that he was not really wise, although he was thought wise by many, and still wiser by himself; and thereupon I tried to explain to him that he thought himself wise, but was not really wise; and the consequence was that he hated me, and his enmity was shared by several who were present and heard me. So I left him, saying to myself, as I went away: Well, although I do not suppose that either of us knows anything really beautiful and good, I am better off than he is,—for he knows nothing, and thinks that he knows; I neither know nor think that I know. In this latter particular, then, I seem to have slightly the advantage of him. Then I went to another who had still higher pretensions to wisdom, and my conclusion was exactly the same. Whereupon I made another enemy of him, and of many others besides him."

- "Then I went to one man after another, being not unconscious of the enmity which I provoked, and I lamented and feared this: but necessity was laid upon me,—the word of God, I thought, ought to be considered first." (This is my fear. I am too 'abrasive')

- "I found that the men most in repute were all but the most foolish; and that others less esteemed were really wiser and better."

- "Then I knew that not by wisdom do poets write poetry, but by a sort of genius and inspiration; they are like diviners or soothsayers who also say many fine things, but do not understand the meaning of them."

- "At last I went to the artisans. I was conscious that I knew nothing at all, as I may say, and I was sure that they knew many fine things; and here I was not mistaken, for they did know many things of which I was ignorant, and in this they certainly were wiser than I was. But I observed that even the good artisans fell into the same error as the poets;—because they were good workmen they thought that they also knew all sorts of high matters, and this defect in them overshadowed their wisdom..."

- "This inquisition has led to my having many enemies of the worst and most dangerous kind, and has given occasion also to many calumnies. And I am called wise, for my hearers always imagine that I myself possess the wisdom which I find wanting in others: but the truth is, O men of Athens, that *God only is wise; and by his answer he intends to show that the wisdom of men is worth little or nothing; he is not speaking of Socrates, he is only using my name by way of illustration, as if he said, He, O men, is the wisest, who, like Socrates, knows that his wisdom is in truth worth nothing.*"

- "they repeat the ready-made charges which are used against all philosophers about teaching things up in the clouds and under the earth, and having no gods, and making the worse appear the better cause; for they do not like to confess that their pretense of knowledge has been detected—which is the truth..."

- "And are you not ashamed, Socrates, of a course of life which is likely to bring you to an untimely end? To him I may fairly answer: There you are mistaken: a man who is good for anything ought not to calculate the chance of living or dying; he ought only to consider whether in doing anything he is doing right or wrong—acting the part of a good man or of a bad."

- "...the philosopher's mission of searching into myself and other men, I were to desert my post through fear of death, or any other fear; that would indeed be strange, and I might justly be arraigned in court for denying the existence of the gods, if I disobeyed the oracle because I was afraid of death, fancying that I was wise when I was not wise. For the fear of death is indeed the pretence of wisdom, and not real wisdom, being a pretence of knowing the unknown; and no one knows whether death, which men in their fear apprehend to be the greatest evil, may not be the greatest good."

- "...are you not ashamed of heaping up the greatest amount of money and honour and reputation, and caring so little about wisdom and truth and the greatest improvement of the soul, which you never regard or heed at all? And if the person with whom I am arguing, says: Yes, but I do care; then I do not leave him or let him go at once; but I proceed to interrogate and examine and cross-examine him, and if I think that he has no virtue in him, but only says that he has, I reproach him with undervaluing the greater, and overvaluing the less."

- "For I do nothing but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, not to take thought for your persons or your properties, but first and chiefly to care about the greatest improvement of the soul. I tell you that virtue is not given by money, but that from virtue comes money and every other good of man, public as well as private. This is my teaching, and if this is the doctrine which corrupts the youth, I am a mischievous person. But if any one says that this is not my teaching, he is speaking an untruth."

- "What return shall be made to the man who has never had the wit to be idle during his whole life; but has been careless of what the many care for—wealth, and family interests, and military offices, and speaking in the assembly, and magistracies, and plots, and parties."

- "For if I tell you that to do as you say would be a disobedience to the God, and therefore that I cannot hold my tongue, you will not believe that I am serious; and if I say again that daily to discourse about

virtue, and of those other things about which you hear me examining myself and others, is the greatest good of man, and that the unexamined life is not worth living, you are still less likely to believe me.”

- “Let us reflect in another way, and we shall see that there is great reason to hope that death is a good; for one of two things—either death is a state of nothingness and utter unconsciousness, or, as men say, there is a change and migration of the soul from this world to another.”

- “What infinite delight would there be in conversing with them and asking them questions! In another world they do not put a man to death for asking questions: assuredly not. For besides being happier than we are, they will be immortal, if what is said is true. Wherefore, O judges, be of good cheer about death, and know of a certainty, that *no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death.*”

- “Still I have a favour to ask of them. When my sons are grown up, I would ask you, O my friends, to punish them; and I would have you trouble them, as I have troubled you, if they seem to care about riches, or anything, more than about virtue; or if they pretend to be something when they are really nothing,—then reprove them, as I have reproved you, for not caring about that for which they ought to care, and thinking that they are something when they are really nothing. And if you do this, both I and my sons will have received justice at your hands.”

Phaedo

- “...*I desire to prove to you that the real philosopher has reason to be of good cheer when he is about to die, and that after death he may hope to obtain the greatest good in the other world...For I deem that the true votary of philosophy is likely to be misunderstood by other men; they do not perceive that he is always pursuing death and dying; and if this be so, and he has had the desire of death all his life long, why when his time comes should he repine at that which he has been always pursuing and desiring?*

- “Ought the philosopher to care about the pleasures—if they are to be called pleasures—of eating and drinking? Certainly not, answered Simmias. And what about the pleasures of love—should he care for them? By no means. And will he think much of the other ways of indulging the body, for example, the acquisition of costly raiment, or sandals, or other adornments of the body? Instead of caring about them, does he not rather despise anything more than nature needs? What do you say? I should say that the true philosopher would despise them. Would you not say that he is entirely concerned with the soul and not with the body? He would like, as far as he can, to get away from the body and to turn to the soul. Quite true. In matters of this sort philosophers, above all other men, may be observed in every sort of way to dis sever the soul from the communion of the body...the rest of the world are of opinion that to him who has no sense of pleasure and no part in bodily pleasure, life is not worth having; and that he who is indifferent about them is as good as dead.”

- “And he attains to the purest knowledge of them who goes to each with the mind alone, not introducing or intruding in the act of thought sight or any other sense together with reason, but with the very light of the mind in her own clearness searches into the very truth of each; he who has got rid, as far as he can, of eyes and ears and, so to speak, of the whole body, these being in his opinion distracting elements which when they infect the soul hinder her from acquiring truth and knowledge—who, if not he, is likely to attain the knowledge of true being?”

- "Whence come wars, and fightings, and factions? whence but from the body and the lusts of the body? wars are occasioned by the love of money, and money has to be acquired for the sake and in the service of the body; and by reason of all these impediments we have no time to give to philosophy; and, last and worst of all, even if we are at leisure and betake ourselves to some speculation, the body is always breaking in upon us, causing turmoil and confusion in our enquiries, and so amazing us that we are prevented from seeing the truth."

- "Whence come wars, and fightings, and factions? whence but from the body and the lusts of the body? wars are occasioned by the love of money, and money has to be acquired for the sake and in the service of the body; and by reason of all these impediments we have no time to give to philosophy; and, last and worst of all, even if we are at leisure and betake ourselves to some speculation, the body is always breaking in upon us, causing turmoil and confusion in our enquiries, and so amazing us that we are prevented from seeing the truth. It has been proved to us by experience that if we would have pure knowledge of anything we must be quit of the body—the soul in herself must behold things in themselves: and then we shall attain the wisdom which we desire, and of which we say that we are lovers, not while we live, but after death; for if while in company with the body, the soul cannot have pure knowledge, one of two things follows—either knowledge is not to be attained at all, or, if at all, after death. For then, and not till then, the soul will be parted from the body and exist in herself alone. In this present life, I reckon that we make the nearest approach to knowledge when we have the least possible intercourse or communion with the body, and are not surfeited with the bodily nature, but keep ourselves pure until the hour when God himself is pleased to release us."

- *"And, as I was saying at first, there would be a ridiculous contradiction in men studying to live as nearly as they can in a state of death, and yet repining when it comes upon them."*

- "And when you see a man who is repining at the approach of death, is not his reluctance a sufficient proof that he is not a lover of wisdom, but a lover of the body, and probably at the same time a lover of either money or power, or both?"

- "The founders of the mysteries would appear to have had a real meaning, and were not talking nonsense when they intimated in a figure long ago that he who passes unsanctified and uninitiated into the world below will lie in a slough, but that he who arrives there after initiation and purification will dwell with the gods."

- "From the senses then is derived the knowledge that all sensible things aim at an absolute equality of which they fall short? Yes. *Then before we began to see or hear or perceive in any way, we must have had a knowledge of absolute equality*, or we could not have referred to that standard the equals which are derived from the senses?—for to that they all aspire, and of that they fall short." (me- Descartes says this. Aquinas also says this in his 'fourth way'. How do we criticize something for being "deficient" if we have no prior conception of "absolute" or "perfection"?)

- "But the soul which has been polluted, and is impure at the time of her departure, and is the companion and servant of the body always, and *is in love with and fascinated by the body and by the desires and pleasures of the body, until she is led to believe that the truth only exists in a bodily form, which a man may touch and see and taste, and use for the purposes of his lusts*,—the soul, I mean, accustomed to hate and fear and avoid the intellectual principle, which to the bodily eye is dark and invisible, and can be attained only by philosophy;—do you suppose that such a soul will depart pure and unalloyed? Impossible, he replied. She is held fast by the corporeal, which the continual

association and constant care of the body have wrought into her nature. Very true. And *this corporeal element, my friend, is heavy and weighty and earthy, and is that element of sight by which a soul is depressed and dragged down again into the visible world...*"

- "No one who has not studied philosophy and who is not entirely pure at the time of his departure is allowed to enter the company of the Gods, but the lover of knowledge only."

- "...the true votaries of philosophy abstain from all fleshly lusts, and hold out against them and refuse to give themselves up to them..."

- "The lovers of knowledge are conscious that the soul was simply fastened and glued to the body—until philosophy received her, she could only view real existence through the bars of a prison, not in and through herself; she was wallowing in the mire of every sort of ignorance; and by reason of lust had become the principal accomplice in her own captivity. This was her original state; and then, as I was saying, and as the lovers of knowledge are well aware, philosophy, seeing how terrible was her confinement, of which she was to herself the cause, received and gently comforted her and sought to release her, pointing out that *the eye and the ear and the other senses are full of deception*, and persuading her to retire from them, and abstain from all but the necessary use of them, and *be gathered up and collected into herself*, bidding her trust in herself and her own pure apprehension of pure existence, and to mistrust whatever comes to her through other channels and is subject to variation; for such things are visible and tangible, but what she sees in her own nature is intelligible and invisible. And the soul of the true philosopher thinks that she ought not to resist this deliverance, and therefore *abstains from pleasures and desires and pains and fears, as far as she is able...*"

- "The evil is that when the feeling of pleasure or pain is most intense, every soul of man imagines the objects of this intense feeling to be then plainest and truest: but this is not so, they are really the things of sight...Why, because each pleasure and pain is a sort of nail which nails and rivets the soul to the body, until she becomes like the body, and believes that to be true which the body affirms to be true; and from agreeing with the body and having the same delights she is obliged to have the same habits and haunts, and is not likely ever to be pure at her departure to the world below, but *is always infected by the body*; and so she sinks into another body and there germinates and grows, and has therefore no part in the communion of the divine and pure and simple."

- "Nor am I any longer satisfied that I understand the reason why one or anything else is either generated or destroyed or is at all..."

- "it can be beautiful only in as far as it partakes of absolute beauty—and I should say the same of everything."

- "Those too who have been pre-eminent for holiness of life are released from this earthly prison, and go to their pure home which is above, and dwell in the purer earth; and of these, such as have duly purified themselves with philosophy live henceforth altogether without the body, in mansions fairer still which may not be described, and of which the time would fail me to tell."

- "The venture is a glorious one, and he ought to comfort himself with words like these, which is the reason why I lengthen out the tale. Wherefore, I say, let a man be of good cheer about his soul, who *having cast away the pleasures and ornaments of the body as alien to him and working harm rather than good*, has sought after the pleasures of knowledge; and has arrayed the soul, not in some foreign attire, but in her own proper jewels, temperance, and justice, and courage, and nobility, and truth—in these adorned she is ready to go on her journey to the world below, when her hour comes."

Phaedrus

- *"I am still unable, as the Delphic inscription orders, to know myself; and it really seems to me ridiculous to look into other things before I have understood that. This is why I do not concern myself with them. [accept what is generally believed, and, as I was just saying, I look not into them but into my own self."*

- *"He stands outside human concerns and draws close to the divine; ordinary people think he is disturbed and rebuke him for this, unaware that he is possessed by god...he would like to fly away, but he cannot; he is like a bird fluttering and looking upward and careless of the world below; and he is therefore thought to be mad."*

- *"Few only retain an adequate remembrance of them; and they, when they behold here any image of that other world, are rapt in amazement, but they are ignorant of what this rapture means, because they do not clearly perceive. For there is no light of justice or temperance or any of the higher ideas which are precious to souls in the earthly copies of them: they are seen through a glass dimly; and there are few who, going to the images, behold in them the realities, and these only with difficulty."* (a psychedelic/psilocybin journey, what a great description)

- *"But this is the privilege of beauty, that being the loveliest she is also the most palpable to sight. Now he who is not newly initiated or who has become corrupted, does not easily rise out of this world to the sight of true beauty in the other; he looks only at her earthly namesake, and instead of being awed at the sight of her, he is given over to pleasure, and like a brutish beast he rushes on to enjoy and beget; he consorts with wantonness, and is not afraid or ashamed of pursuing pleasure in violation of nature."*

- *"...the entire soul is pierced and maddened and pained, and at the recollection of beauty is again delighted. And from both of them together the soul is oppressed at the strangeness of her condition, and is in a great strait and excitement, and in her madness can neither sleep by night nor abide in her place by day. And wherever she thinks that she will behold the beautiful one, thither in her desire she runs. And when she has seen him, and bathed herself in the waters of beauty, her constraint is loosened, and she is refreshed, and has no more pangs and pains; and this is the sweetest of all pleasures at the time, and is the reason why the soul of the lover will never forsake his beautiful one, whom he esteems above all; he has forgotten mother and brethren and companions, and he thinks nothing of the neglect and loss of his property; the rules and proprieties of life, on which he formerly prided himself, he now despises, and is ready to sleep like a servant, wherever he is allowed, as near as he can to his desired one, who is the object of his worship, and the physician who can alone assuage the greatness of his pain."* (great to find this in Plato in such a roundabout way, after all the other readings; coming back to the ground of western philosophy and finding the same message in the ground of Eastern philosophies)

- *"...when he sees the beautiful one he is ready to die of fear. And from that time forward the soul of the lover follows the beloved in modesty and holy fear."* (Plato is mentioning pride and the importance of humility)

- *"For what should a man live if not for the pleasures of discourse? Surely not for the sake of bodily pleasures, which almost always have previous pain as a condition of them, and therefore are rightly called slavish."*

- "the speaker who knows the truth may, without any serious purpose, steal away the hearts of his hearers. This piece of good-fortune I attribute to the local deities; and perhaps, the prophets of the Muses who are singing over our heads may have imparted their inspiration to me. For I do not imagine that I have any rhetorical art of my own." (From nothing, Nothing comes, Socrates' humility is always present)
- "And in this instance, you who are the father of letters, from a paternal love of your own children have been led to attribute to them a quality which they cannot have; for this discovery of yours *will create forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves. The specific which you have discovered is an aid not to memory, but to reminiscence, and you give your disciples not truth, but only the semblance of truth; they will be hearers of many things and will have learned nothing; they will appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing; they will be tiresome company, having the show of wisdom without the reality.* " (Kierkegaard and forgetting that we are a Self, Jeopardy, KOGWY, most or maybe all 'intellectuals')
- "There was a tradition in the temple of Dodona that oaks first gave prophetic utterances. The men of old, unlike in their simplicity to young philosophy, deemed that if they heard the truth even from "oak or rock," it was enough for them; whereas you seem to consider not whether a thing is or is not true, but who the speaker is and from what country the tale comes." (which is why a 21 year old can seem 'older' or more 'aware' than a 70 year old)
- "...whether private man or statesman, proposes laws and so becomes the author of a political treatise, fancying that there is any great certainty and clearness in his performance, the fact of his so writing is only a disgrace to him, whatever men may say. For not to know the nature of justice and injustice, and good and evil, and not to be able to distinguish the dream from the reality, cannot in truth be otherwise than disgraceful to him, even though he have the applause of the whole world..."
- "...he who thinks that in the written word there is necessarily much which is not serious, and that neither poetry nor prose, spoken or written, is of any great value, if, like the compositions of the rhapsodes, they are only recited in order to be believed, and not with any view to criticism or instruction; and who thinks that *even the best of writings are but a reminiscence of what we know*, and that only in principles of justice and goodness and nobility taught and communicated orally for the sake of instruction and graven in the soul..."
- "...give me beauty in the inward soul; and may the outward and inward man be at one." (me: divided self, Tolstoy, Vivekananda, Kierkegaard, etc.)

15. William Lane Craig

The Absurdity of Life Without God

The Absurdity of Life without God |

Reasonable Faith

William Lane Craig

Summary

Why on atheism life has no ultimate meaning, value, or purpose, and why this view is unlivable.

The Necessity of God and Immortality

Man, writes Loren Eiseley, is the Cosmic Orphan. He is the only creature in the universe who asks, "Why?" Other animals have instincts to guide them, but man has learned to ask questions. "Who am I?" man asks. "Why am I here? Where am I going?" Since the Enlightenment, when he threw off the shackles of religion, man has tried to answer these questions without reference to God. But the answers that came back were not exhilarating, but dark and terrible. "You are the accidental by-product of nature, a result of matter plus time plus chance. There is no reason for your existence. All you face is death."

Modern man thought that when he had gotten rid of God, he had freed himself from all that repressed and stifled him. Instead, he discovered that in killing God, he had also killed himself. For if there is no God, then man's life becomes absurd.

If God does not exist, then both man and the universe are inevitably doomed to death. Man, like all biological organisms, must die. With no hope of immortality, man's life leads only to the grave. His life is but a spark in the infinite blackness, a spark that appears, flickers, and dies forever. Therefore, everyone must come face to face with what theologian Paul Tillich has called "the threat of non-being." For though I know now that I exist, that I am alive, I also know that someday I will no longer exist, that I will no longer be, that I will die. This thought is staggering and threatening: to think that the person I call "myself" will cease to exist, that I will be no more!

I remember vividly the first time my father told me that someday I would die. Somehow as a child the thought had just never occurred to me. When he told me, I was filled with fear and unbearable sadness. And though he tried repeatedly to reassure me that this was a long way off, that did not seem to matter. Whether sooner or later, the undeniable fact was that I would die and be no more, and the thought overwhelmed me. Eventually, like all of us, I grew to simply accept the fact. We all learn to live with the inevitable. But the child's insight remains true. As the French existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre observed, several hours or several years make no difference once you have lost eternity.

Whether it comes sooner or later, the prospect of death and the threat of non-being is a terrible horror. But I met a student once who did not feel this

threat. He said he had been raised on the farm and was used to seeing the animals being born and dying. Death was for him simply natural—a part of life, so to speak. I was puzzled by how different our two perspectives on death were and found it difficult to understand why he did not feel the threat of non-being. Years later, I think I found my answer in reading Sartre. Sartre observed that death is not threatening so long as we view it as the death of the other, from a third-person standpoint, so to speak. It is only when we internalize it and look at it from the first-person perspective—"my death: I am going to die"—that the threat of non-being becomes real. As Sartre points out, many people never assume this first-person perspective in the midst of life; one can even look at one's own death from the third-person standpoint, as if it were the death of another or even of an animal, as did my friend. But the true existential significance of my death can only be appreciated from the first-person perspective, as I realize that I am going to die and forever cease to exist. My life is just a momentary transition out of oblivion into oblivion.

And the universe, too, faces death. Scientists tell us that the universe is expanding, and everything in it is growing farther and farther apart. As it does so, it grows colder and colder, and its energy is used up. Eventually all the stars will burn out and all matter will collapse into dead stars and black holes. There will be no light at all; there will be no heat; there will be no life; only the corpses of dead stars and galaxies, ever expanding into the endless darkness and the cold recesses of space—a universe in ruins. So not only is the life of each individual person doomed; the entire human race is doomed. There is no escape. There is no hope.

The Absurdity of Life without God and Immortality

If there is no God, then man and the universe are doomed. Like prisoners condemned to death, we await our unavoidable execution. There is no God, and there is no immortality. And what is the consequence of this? It means that life itself is absurd. It means that the life we have is without ultimate significance, value, or purpose. Let's look at each of these.

No Ultimate Meaning without Immortality and God

If each individual person passes out of existence when he dies, then what ultimate meaning can be given to his life? Does it really matter whether he ever existed at all? His life may be important relative to certain other events, but what is the ultimate significance of any of those events? If all the events are meaningless, then what can be the ultimate meaning of influencing any of them? Ultimately it makes no difference.

Look at it from another perspective: Scientists say that the universe originated in an explosion called the

"Big Bang" about 13 billion years ago. Suppose the Big Bang had never occurred. Suppose the universe had never existed. What ultimate difference would it make? The universe is doomed

to die anyway. In the end it makes no difference whether the universe ever existed or not. Therefore, it is without ultimate significance.

The same is true of the human race. Mankind is a doomed race in a dying universe. Because the human race will eventually cease to exist, it makes no ultimate difference whether it ever did exist. Mankind is thus no more significant than a swarm of mosquitos or a barnyard of pigs, for their end is all the same. The same blind cosmic process that coughed them up in the first place will eventually swallow them all again.

And the same is true of each individual person. The contributions of the scientist to the advance of human knowledge, the researches of the doctor to alleviate pain and suffering, the efforts of the diplomat to secure peace in the world, the sacrifices of good men everywhere to better the lot of the human race--all these come to nothing. This is the horror of modern man: because he ends in nothing, he is nothing.

But it is important to see that it is not just immortality that man needs if life is to be meaningful. Mere duration of existence does not make that existence meaningful. If man and the universe could exist forever, but if there were no God, their existence would still have no ultimate significance. To illustrate: I once read a science-fiction story in which an astronaut was marooned on a barren chunk of rock lost in outer space. He had with him two vials: one containing poison and the other a potion that would make him live forever. Realizing his predicament, he gulped down the poison. But

then to his horror, he discovered he had swallowed the wrong vial—he had drunk the potion for immortality. And that meant that he was cursed to exist forever—a meaningless, unending life. Now if God does not exist, our lives are just like that. They could go on and on and still be utterly without meaning. We could still ask of life, "So what?" So it is not just immortality man needs if life is to be ultimately significant; he needs God and immortality. And if God does not exist, then he has neither.

Twentieth-century man came to understand this. Read *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett. During this entire play two men carry on trivial conversation while waiting for a third man to arrive, who never does. Our lives are like that, Beckett is saying; we just kill time waiting—for what, we don't know. In a tragic portrayal of man, Beckett wrote another play in which the curtain opens revealing a stage littered with junk. For thirty long seconds, the audience sits and stares in silence at that junk. Then the curtain closes. That's all.

French existentialists Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus understood this, too. Sartre portrayed life in his

play *No Exit* as hell—the final line of the play are the words of resignation, "Well, let's get on with it." Hence, Sartre writes elsewhere of the "nausea" of existence. Camus, too, saw life as absurd. At the end of his brief novel *The Stranger*, Camus's hero discovers in a flash of insight that the universe has no meaning and there is no God to give it one.

Thus, if there is no God, then life itself becomes meaningless. Man and the universe are without ultimate significance.

No Ultimate Value Without Immortality and God

If life ends at the grave, then it makes no difference whether one has lived as a Stalin or as a saint. Since one's destiny is ultimately unrelated to one's behavior, you may as well just live as you please. As Dostoyevsky put it: "If there is no immortality then all things are permitted." On this basis, a writer like Ayn Rand is absolutely correct to praise the virtues of selfishness. Live totally for self; no one holds you accountable! Indeed, it would be foolish to do anything else, for life is too short to jeopardize it by acting out of anything but pure self-interest. Sacrifice for another person would be stupid. Kai Nielsen, an atheist philosopher who attempts to defend the viability of ethics without God, in the end admits,

We have not been able to show that reason requires the moral point of view, or that all really rational persons, unhoodwinked by myth or ideology, need not be individual egoists or classical amorlists. Reason doesn't decide here. The picture I have painted for you is not a pleasant one. Reflection on it depresses me Pure practical reason, even with a good knowledge of the facts, will not take you to morality. [1]

But the problem becomes even worse. For, regardless of immortality, if there is no God, then there can be no objective standards of right and wrong. All we are confronted with is, in Jean-Paul Sartre's words, the bare, valueless fact of existence. Moral values are either just expressions of personal taste or the by-products of socio-biological evolution and conditioning. In a world without God, who is to say which values are right and which are wrong? Who is to judge that the values of Adolf Hitler are inferior to those of a saint? The concept of morality loses all meaning in a universe without God. As one contemporary atheistic ethicist points out, "to say that something is wrong because . . . it is forbidden by God, is . . . perfectly understandable to anyone who believes in a law-giving God. But to say that something is wrong . . . even though no God exists to forbid it, is not understandable. . . ." "The concept of moral obligation [is] unintelligible apart from the idea of God. The words remain but their meaning is gone." [2] In a world without God, there can be no objective right and wrong, only our culturally and personally relative, subjective judgments. This means that it is impossible to condemn war, oppression, or crime as evil. Nor can one praise brotherhood, equality, and love as good. For in a universe without God, good and evil do not exist—there is only the bare valueless fact of *being*, and there is no one to say you

are right and I am wrong.

No Ultimate Purpose Without Immortality and God

If death stands with open arms at the end of life's trail, then what is the goal of life? Is it all for nothing? Is there no reason for life? And what of the universe? Is it utterly pointless? If its destiny is a cold grave in the recesses of outer space the answer must be, yes—it is pointless. There is no goal no purpose for the universe. The litter of a dead universe will just go on expanding and expanding—forever.

And what of man? Is there no purpose at all for the human race? Or will it simply peter out someday lost in the oblivion of an indifferent universe? The English writer H. G. Wells foresaw such a prospect. In his novel *The Time Machine* Wells's time traveler journeys far into the future to discover the destiny of man. All he finds is a dead earth, save for a few lichens and moss, orbiting a gigantic red sun. The only sounds are the rush of the wind and the gentle ripple of the sea. "Beyond these lifeless sounds," writes Wells, "the world was silent. Silent? It would be hard to convey the stillness of it. All the sounds of man, the bleating of sheep, the cries of birds, the hum of insects, the stir that makes the background of our lives—all that was over." [3] And so Wells's time traveler returned. But to what?—to merely an earlier point on the purposeless rush toward oblivion. When as a non-Christian I first read Wells's book, I thought, "No, no! It can't end that way!" But if there is no God, it will end that way, like it or not. This is reality in a universe without God: there is no hope; there is no purpose.

What is true of mankind as a whole is true of each of us individually: we are here to no purpose. If there is no God, then our life is not qualitatively different from that of a dog. As the ancient writer of *Ecclesiastes* put it:

"The fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity. All go to the same place. All come from the dust and all return to the dust" (*Eccles* 3:19-20). In this book, which reads more like a piece of modern existentialist literature than a book of the Bible, the writer shows the futility of pleasure, wealth, education, political fame, and honor in a life doomed to end in death. His verdict? "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity" (1:2). If life ends at the grave, then we have no ultimate purpose for living.

But more than that: even if it did not end in death, without God life would still be without purpose. For man and the universe would then be simple accidents of chance, thrust into existence for no reason. Without God the universe is the result of a cosmic accident, a chance explosion. There is no reason for which it exists. As for man, he is a freak of nature— a blind product of matter plus time plus chance. Man

is just a lump of slime that evolved rationality. As one philosopher has put it: "Human life is mounted upon a subhuman pedestal and must shift for itself alone in the heart of a silent and mindless universe."
[4]

What is true of the universe and of the human race is also true of us as individuals. If God does not exist, then you are just a miscarriage of nature, thrust into a purposeless universe to live a purposeless life.

So if God does not exist, that means that man and the universe exist to no purpose—since the end of everything is death—and that they came to be for no purpose, since they are only blind products of chance. In short, life is utterly without reason.

Do you understand the gravity of the alternatives before us? For if God exists, then there is hope for man. But if God does not exist, then all we are left with is despair. Do you understand why the question of God's existence is so vital to man? As one writer has aptly put it, "If God is dead, then man is dead, too."

Unfortunately, the mass of mankind do not realize this fact. They continue on as though nothing has changed. I'm reminded of Nietzsche's story of the madman who in the early morning hours burst into the marketplace, lantern in hand, crying, "I seek God! I seek God!" Since many of those standing about did not believe in God, he provoked much laughter. "Did God get lost?" they taunted him. "Or is he hiding? Or maybe he has gone on a voyage or emigrated!" Thus they yelled and laughed. Then, writes Nietzsche, the madman turned in their midst and pierced them with his eyes

'Whither is God?' he cried, 'I shall tell you. We have killed him—you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how have we done this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What did we do when we unchained this earth from its sun?

Whither is it moving now? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there any up or down left? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night and more night coming on all the while? Must not lanterns be lit in the morning? Do we not hear anything yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? . . . God is dead. . . . And we have killed him. How shall we, the murderers of all murderers, comfort ourselves? [5]

The crowd stared at the madman in silence and astonishment. At last he dashed his lantern to the ground. "I have come too early," he said. "This tremendous event is still on its way—it has not yet reached the ears of man." Men did not yet truly comprehend the consequences of what they had done in killing God. But Nietzsche predicted that someday people would realize the implications of their atheism; and this realization would usher in an age of nihilism—the destruction of all meaning and value in life.

Most people still do not reflect on the consequences of atheism and so, like the crowd in the marketplace, go unknowingly on their way. But when we realize, as did Nietzsche, what atheism implies, then his question presses hard upon us: how shall we, the murderers of all murderers, comfort ourselves?

The Practical Impossibility of Atheism

About the only solution the atheist can offer is that we face the absurdity of life and live bravely. Bertrand Russell, for example, wrote that we must build our lives upon "the firm foundation of unyielding despair." [6] Only by recognizing that the world really is a terrible place can we successfully come to terms with life. Camus said that we should honestly recognize life's absurdity and then live in love for one another.

The fundamental problem with this solution, however, is that it is impossible to live consistently and happily within such a world view. If one lives consistently, he will not be happy; if one lives happily, it is only because he is not consistent. Francis Schaeffer has explained this point well. Modern man, says Schaeffer, resides in a two-story universe. In the lower story is the finite world without God; here life is absurd, as we have seen. In the upper story are meaning, value, and purpose. Now modern man lives in the lower story because he believes there is no God. But he cannot live happily in such an absurd world; therefore, he continually makes leaps of faith into the upper story to affirm meaning, value, and purpose, even though he has no right to, since he does not believe in God.

Let's look again, then, at each of the three areas in which we saw life was absurd without God, to show how man cannot live consistently and happily with his atheism.

Meaning of Life

First, the area of meaning. We saw that without God, life has no meaning. Yet philosophers continue to live as though life does have meaning. For example, Sartre argued that one may create meaning for his life by freely choosing to follow a certain course of action. Sartre himself chose Marxism.

Now this is utterly inconsistent. It is inconsistent to say life is objectively absurd and then to say one may create meaning for his life. If life is really absurd, then man is trapped in the lower story. To try to create meaning in life represents a leap to the upper story. But Sartre has no basis for this leap. Without God, there can be no objective meaning in life. Sartre's program is actually an exercise in self-delusion. Sartre is really saying, "Let's pretend the universe has meaning." And this is just fooling ourselves.

The point is this: if God does not exist, then life is objectively meaningless; but man cannot live consistently and happily knowing that life is meaningless; so in order to be happy he pretends life has meaning. But this is, of course, entirely inconsistent—for without God, man and the universe are without any real significance.

Value of Life

Turn now to the problem of value. Here is where the most blatant inconsistencies occur. First of all, atheistic humanists are totally inconsistent in affirming the traditional values of love and brotherhood.

Camus has been rightly criticized for inconsistently holding both to the absurdity of life and the ethics of human love and brotherhood. The two are logically incompatible. Bertrand Russell, too, was inconsistent. For though he was an atheist, he was an outspoken social critic, denouncing war and restrictions on sexual freedom. Russell admitted that he could not live as though ethical values were simply a matter of personal taste, and that he therefore found his own views "incredible." "I do not know the solution," he confessed." [7] The point is that if there is no God, then objective right and wrong cannot exist. As Dostoyevsky said, "All things are permitted."

But Dostoyevsky also showed that man cannot live this way. He cannot live as though it is perfectly all right for soldiers to slaughter innocent children. He cannot live as though it is all right for dictators like Pol Pot to exterminate millions of their own countrymen. Everything in him cries out to say these acts are wrong—really wrong. But if there is no God, he cannot. So he makes a leap of faith and affirms values anyway. And when he does so, he reveals the inadequacy of a world without God.

The horror of a world devoid of value was brought home to me with new intensity a few years ago as I viewed a BBC television documentary called "The Gathering." It concerned the reunion of survivors of the Holocaust in Jerusalem, where they rediscovered lost friendships and shared their experiences. One woman prisoner, a nurse, told of how she was made the gynecologist at Auschwitz. She observed that pregnant women were grouped together by the soldiers under the direction of Dr. Mengele and housed in the same barracks. Some time passed, and she noted that she no

longer saw any of these women. She made inquiries. "Where are the pregnant women who were housed in that barracks?" "Haven't you heard?" came the reply. "Dr. Mengele used them for vivisection."

Another woman told of how Mengele had bound up her breasts so that she could not suckle her infant. The doctor wanted to learn how long an infant could survive without nourishment. Desperately this poor woman tried to keep her baby alive by giving it pieces of bread soaked in coffee, but to no avail. Each day the baby lost weight, a fact that was eagerly monitored by Dr. Mengele. A nurse then came secretly to this

woman and told her, "I have arranged a way for you to get out of here, but you cannot take your baby with you. I have brought a morphine injection that you can give to your child to end its life." When the woman protested, the nurse was insistent: "Look, your baby is going to die anyway. At least save yourself." And so this mother took the life of her own baby. Dr. Mengele was furious when he learned of it because he had lost his experimental specimen, and he searched among the dead to find the baby's discarded corpse so that he could have one last weighing.

My heart was torn by these stories. One rabbi who survived the camp summed it up well when he said that at Auschwitz it was as though there existed a world in which all the Ten Commandments were reversed. Mankind had never seen such a hell.

And yet, if God does not exist, then in a sense, our world is Auschwitz: there is no absolute right and wrong; all things are permitted. But no atheist, no agnostic, can live consistently with such a view. Nietzsche himself, who proclaimed the necessity of living beyond good and evil, broke with his mentor Richard Wagner precisely over the issue of the composer's anti-Semitism and strident German nationalism. Similarly Sartre, writing in the aftermath of the Second World War, condemned anti-Semitism, declaring that a doctrine that leads to extermination is not merely an opinion or matter of personal taste, of equal value with its opposite. [8] In his important essay "Existentialism Is a Humanism," Sartre struggles vainly to elude the contradiction between his denial of divinely pre-established values and his urgent desire to affirm the value of human persons. Like Russell, he could not live with the implications of his own denial of ethical absolutes.

A second problem is that if God does not exist and there is no immortality, then all the evil acts of men go unpunished and all the sacrifices of good men go unrewarded. But who can live with such a view? Richard Wurmbrand, who has been tortured for his faith in communist prisons, says,

The cruelty of atheism is hard to believe when man has no faith in the reward of good or the punishment of evil. There is no reason to be human. There is no restraint from the depths of evil which is in man. The communist torturers often said, 'There is no God, no Hereafter, no punishment for evil. We can do what we wish.' I have heard one torturer

even say, 'I thank God, in whom I don't believe, that I have lived to this hour when I can express all the evil in my heart.' He expressed it in unbelievable brutality and torture inflicted on prisoners. [9]

And the same applies to acts of self-sacrifice. A number of years ago, a terrible mid-winter air disaster occurred in which a plane leaving the Washington, D.C., airport smashed into a bridge spanning the Potomac River, plunging its passengers into the icy waters. As the rescue helicopters came, attention was

focused on one man who again and again pushed the dangling rope ladder to other passengers rather than be pulled to safety himself. Six times he passed the ladder by. When they came again, he was gone. He had freely given his life that others might live. The whole nation turned its eyes to this man in respect and admiration for the selfless and good act he had performed. And yet, if the atheist is right, that man was not noble—he did the stupidest thing possible. He should have gone for the ladder first, pushed others away if necessary in order to survive. But to die for others he did not even know, to give up all the brief existence he would ever have—what for? For the atheist there can be no reason. And yet the atheist, like the rest of us, instinctively reacts with praise for this man's selfless action. Indeed, one will probably never find an atheist who lives consistently with his system. For a universe without moral accountability and devoid of value is unimaginably terrible.

Purpose of Life

Finally, let's look at the problem of purpose in life. The only way most people who deny purpose in life live happily is either by making up some purpose, which amounts to self-delusion as we saw with Sartre, or by not carrying their view to its logical conclusions. Take the problem of death, for example. According to Ernst Bloch, the only way modern man lives in the face of death is by subconsciously borrowing the belief in immortality that his forefathers held to, even though he himself has no basis for this belief, since he does not believe in God. By borrowing the remnants of a belief in immortality, writes Bloch, "modern man does not feel the chasm that unceasingly surrounds him and that will certainly engulf him at last. Through these remnants, he saves his sense of self-identity. Through them the impression arises that man is not perishing, but only that one day the world has the whim no longer to appear to him." Bloch concludes, "This quite shallow courage feasts on a borrowed credit card. It lives from earlier hopes and the support that they once had provided." [10] Modern man no longer has any right to that support, since he rejects God. But in order to live purposefully, he makes a leap of faith to affirm a reason for living.

We often find the same inconsistency among those who say that man and the universe came to exist for no reason or purpose, but just by chance. Unable to live in an impersonal universe in which everything is the product of blind chance, these persons begin to ascribe personality and motives to the physical processes themselves. It is a bizarre way of speaking and represents a leap from the lower to the upper story. For example, Francis Crick halfway through his book *The Origin of the Genetic Code* begins to spell nature with a capital "N" and elsewhere speaks of natural selection as

being "clever" and as "thinking" of what it will do. Fred Hoyle, the English astronomer, attributes to the universe itself the qualities of God. For Carl Sagan the "Cosmos," which he always spells with a capital letter, obviously fills the role of a God-substitute. Though all these men profess not to believe in God, they smuggle in a God-substitute through the back door because they cannot bear to live in a universe in which everything is the chance result of impersonal forces.

And it's interesting to see many thinkers betray their views when they're pushed to their logical conclusions. For example, certain feminists have raised a storm of protest over Freudian sexual psychology because it is chauvinistic and degrading to women. And some psychologists have knuckled under and revised their theories. Now this is totally inconsistent. If Freudian psychology is really true, then it doesn't matter if it's degrading to women. You can't change the truth because you don't like what it leads to. But people cannot live consistently and happily in a world where other persons are devalued. Yet if God does not exist, then nobody has any value. Only if God exists can a person consistently support women's rights. For if God does not exist, then natural selection dictates that the male of the species is the dominant and aggressive one. Women would no more have rights than a female goat or chicken have rights. In nature whatever is, is right. But who can live with such a view? Apparently not even Freudian psychologists, who betray their theories when pushed to their logical conclusions.

Or take the sociological behaviorism of a man like B. F. Skinner. This view leads to the sort of society envisioned in George Orwell's 1984, where the government controls and programs the thoughts of everybody. If Skinner's theories are right, then there can be no objection to treating people like the rats in Skinner's rat-box as they run through their mazes, coaxed on by food and electric shocks. According to Skinner, all our actions are determined anyway. And if God does not exist, then no moral objection can be raised against this kind of programming, for man is not qualitatively different from a rat, since both are just matter plus time plus chance. But again, who can live with such a dehumanizing view?

Or finally, take the biological determinism of a man like Francis Crick. The logical conclusion is that man is like any other laboratory specimen. The world was horrified when it learned that at camps like Dachau the Nazis had used prisoners for medical experiments on living humans. But why not? If God does not exist, there can be no objection to using people as human guinea pigs. The end of this view is population control in which the weak and unwanted are killed off to make room for the strong. But the only way we can consistently protest this view is if God exists. Only if God exists can there be purpose in life.

The dilemma of modern man is thus truly terrible. And insofar as he denies the existence of God and the objectivity of value and purpose, this dilemma remains unrelieved for "post-modern" man as well. Indeed, it is precisely the awareness that modernism issues inevitably in absurdity and despair that constitutes the anguish of post-modernism. In some respects,

postmodernism just is the awareness of the bankruptcy of modernity. The atheistic world view is insufficient to maintain a happy and consistent life. Man cannot live consistently and happily as though life were ultimately without meaning, value, or purpose. If we try to live consistently within the atheistic world view, we shall find ourselves profoundly unhappy. If instead we manage to live happily, it is only by giving the lie to our world view.

Confronted with this dilemma, man flounders pathetically for some means of escape. In a remarkable address to the American Academy for the Advancement of Science in 1991, Dr. L. D. Rue, confronted with the predicament of modern man, boldly advocated that we deceive ourselves by means of some "Noble Lie" into thinking that we and the universe still have value. [11] Claiming that "The lesson of the past two centuries is that intellectual and moral relativism is profoundly the case," Dr. Rue muses that the consequence of such a realization is that one's quest for personal wholeness (or self-fulfillment) and the quest for social coherence become independent from one another. This is because on the view of relativism the search for self-fulfillment becomes radically privatized: each person chooses his own set of values and meaning. If we are to avoid "the madhouse option," where self-fulfillment is pursued regardless of social coherence, and "the totalitarian option," where social coherence is imposed at the expense of personal wholeness, then we have no choice but to embrace some Noble Lie that will inspire us to live beyond selfish interests and so achieve social coherence. A Noble Lie "is one that deceives us, tricks us, compels us beyond self-interest, beyond ego, beyond family, nation, [and] race." It is a lie, because it tells us that the universe is infused with

value (which is a great fiction), because it makes a claim to universal truth (when there is none), and because it tells me not to live for self-interest (which is evidently false). "But without such lies, we cannot live."

This is the dreadful verdict pronounced over modern man. In order to survive, he must live in self-deception. But even the Noble Lie option is in the end unworkable. In order to be happy, one must believe in objective meaning, value, and purpose. But how can one believe in those Noble Lies while at the same time believing in atheism and relativism? The more convinced you are of the necessity of a Noble Lie, the less you are able to believe in it. Like a placebo, a Noble Lie works only on those who believe it is the truth. Once we have seen through the fiction, then the Lie has lost its power over us. Thus, ironically, the Noble Lie cannot solve the human predicament for anyone who has come to see that predicament.

The Noble Lie option therefore leads at best to a society in which an elitist group of illuminati deceive the masses for their own good by perpetuating the Noble Lie. But then why should those of us who are enlightened follow the masses in their deception? Why should we sacrifice self-interest for a fiction? If the great lesson of the past two centuries is moral and intellectual relativism, then why (if we could) pretend that we do not know this truth and live a lie instead? If one answers, "for the sake of social coherence," one may legitimately ask why I should sacrifice my self-interest for the sake of social coherence? The only answer the relativist can give is that social coherence is in my self-interest—but the problem with this answer is that self-interest and the interest of the herd do not always coincide. Besides, if

(out of self-interest) I do care about social coherence, the totalitarian option is always open to me: forget the Noble Lie and maintain social coherence (as well as my self-fulfillment) at the expense of the personal wholeness of the masses. Rue would undoubtedly regard such an option as repugnant. But therein lies the rub. Rue's dilemma is that he obviously values deeply both social coherence and personal wholeness for

their own sakes; in other words, they are objective values, which according to his philosophy do not exist. He has already leapt to the upper story. The Noble Lie option thus affirms what it denies and so refutes itself.

The Success of Biblical Christianity

But if atheism fails in this regard, what about biblical Christianity? According to the Christian world view, God does exist, and man's life does not end at the grave. In the resurrection body man may enjoy eternal life and fellowship with God. Biblical Christianity therefore provides the two conditions necessary for a meaningful, valuable, and purposeful life for man: God and immortality. Because of this, we can live consistently and happily. Thus, biblical Christianity succeeds precisely where atheism breaks down.

Conclusion

Now I want to make it clear that I have not yet shown biblical Christianity to be true. But what I have done is clearly spell out the alternatives. If God does not exist, then life is futile. If the God of the Bible does exist, then life is meaningful. Only the second of these two alternatives enables us to live happily and consistently. Therefore, it seems to me that even if the evidence for these two options were absolutely equal, a rational person ought to choose biblical Christianity. It seems to me positively irrational to prefer death, futility, and destruction to life, meaningfulness, and happiness. As Pascal said, we have nothing to lose and infinity to gain.

16. Bertrand Russell

- "And from the monsters, as the play unfolded itself, Man was born, with the power of thought, the knowledge of good and evil, and the cruel thirst for worship. And Man saw that all is passing in this mad, monstrous world, that all is struggling to snatch, at any cost, a few brief moments of life before Death's inexorable decree."

- "And Man said: 'There is a hidden purpose, could we but fathom it, and the purpose is good; for we must reverence something, and in the visible world there is nothing worthy of reverence.'"

- "But gradually, as morality grows bolder, the claim of the ideal world begins to be felt; and worship, if it is not to cease, must be given to gods of another kind than those created by the savage. Some, though they feel the demands of the ideal, will still consciously reject them, still urging that naked Power is worthy of worship. Such is the attitude inculcated in God's answer to Job out of the whirlwind: the divine power and knowledge are paraded, but of the divine goodness there is no hint. Such also is the attitude of those who, in our own day, base their morality upon the struggle for survival, maintaining that the survivors are necessarily the fittest. But others, not content with an answer so repugnant to the moral sense, will adopt the position which we have become accustomed to regard as specially religious, maintaining that, in some hidden manner, the world of fact is really

harmonious with the world of ideals. Thus Man creates God, all-powerful and all-good, the mystic unity of what is and what should be."

- "Let us admit that, in the world we know there are many things that would be better otherwise, and that the ideals to which we do and must adhere are not realized in the realm of matter."

- "Let us preserve our respect for truth, for beauty, for the ideal of perfection which life does not permit us to attain, though none of these things meet with the approval of the unconscious universe. If Power is bad, as it seems to be, let us reject it from our hearts. In this lies Man's true freedom: in *determination to worship only the God created by our own love of the good*, to respect only the heaven which inspires the insight of our best moments. In action, in desire, we must submit perpetually to the tyranny of outside forces; but in thought, in aspiration, we are free, free from our fellowmen, *free from the petty planet on which our bodies impotently crawl, free even, while we live, from the tyranny of death*. Let us learn, then, that energy of faith which enables us to live constantly in the vision of the good; and let us descend, in action, into the world of fact, with that vision always before us."

- "*Freedom comes only to those who no longer ask of life that it shall yield them any of those personal goods that are subject to the mutations of Time.*"

- "Yet, by death, by illness, by poverty, or by the voice of duty, we must learn, each one of us, that the world was not made for us, and that, however beautiful may be the things we crave for, Fate may nevertheless forbid them."

- "Except for those rare spirits that are born without sin, there is a cavern of darkness to be traversed before that temple can be entered. The gate of the cavern is despair, and its floor is paved with the gravestones of abandoned hopes. There Self must die; there the eagerness, the greed of untamed desire must be slain, for only so can the soul be freed from the empire of Fate. But out of the cavern the Gate of Renunciation leads again to the daylight of wisdom, by whose radiance a new insight, a new joy, a new tenderness, shine forth to gladden the pilgrim's heart."

- "In the spectacle of Death, in the endurance of intolerable pain, and in the irrevocableness of a vanished past, there is a sacredness, an overpowering awe, a feeling of the vastness, the depth, the inexhaustible mystery of existence, in which, as by some strange marriage of pain, the sufferer is bound to the world by bonds of sorrow. *In these moments of insight, we lose all eagerness of temporary desire, all struggling and striving for petty ends, all care for the little trivial things that, to a superficial view, make up the common life of day by day; we see, surrounding the narrow raft illumined by the flickering light of human comradeship, the dark ocean on whose rolling waves we toss for a brief hour; from the great night without, a chill blast breaks in upon our refuge; all the loneliness of humanity amid hostile forces is concentrated upon the individual soul, which must struggle alone, with what of courage it can command, against the whole weight of a universe that cares nothing for its hopes and fears.*"

- "To take into the inmost shrine of the soul the irresistible forces whose puppets we seem to be—Death and change, the irrevocableness of the past, and the powerlessness of man before the blind hurry of the universe from vanity to vanity—to feel these things and know them is to conquer them."

- "*To abandon the struggle for private happiness, to expel all eagerness of temporary desire, to burn with passion for eternal things—this is emancipation, and this is the free man's worship. And this liberation is effected by a contemplation of Fate; for Fate itself is subdued by the mind which leaves nothing to be purged by the purifying fire of Time.*"

- *"Brief and powerless is Man's life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way; for Man, condemned to-day to lose his dearest, to-morrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness..."*

- *"Such, in outline, but even more purposeless, more void of meaning, is the world which Science presents for our belief. Amid such a world, if anywhere, our ideals henceforward must find a home. That Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built."*

Mysticism and Logic

- *"...most of them were less anxious to understand the world of science and daily life than to convict it of unreality in the interests of a super-sensible "real" world. It is in this way that logic has been pursued by those of the great philosophers who were mystics. But since they usually took for granted the supposed insight of the mystic emotion, their logical doctrines were presented with a certain dryness, and were believed by their disciples to be quite independent of the sudden illumination from which they sprang." (Symbolism, the direct experience drove them to these conclusions/the 'unreality' of the world does not conflict with science since 'most' mystically inclined thinkers take 'illusion' to be the world's transitory nature rather than as 'not really existing', therefore science still stands as a description or model of the transitory world)*

- *"It is difficult to give a logically tenable account of this position without recognizing that good and evil are subjective, that what is good is merely that towards which we have one kind of feeling, and what is evil is merely that towards which we have another kind of feeling. In our active life, where we have to exercise choice, and to prefer this to that of two possible acts, it is necessary to have a distinction of good and evil, or at least of better and worse. But this distinction, like everything pertaining to action, belongs to what mysticism regards as the world of illusion, if only because it is essentially concerned with time."*

- *"We are thus brought back to our seeming paradox, that a philosophy which does not seek to impose upon the world its own conceptions of good and evil is not only more likely to achieve truth, but is also the outcome of a higher ethical standpoint than one which, like evolutionism and most traditional systems, is perpetually appraising the universe and seeking to find in it an embodiment of present ideals. In religion, and in every deeply serious view of the world and of human destiny, there is an element of submission, a realisation of the limits of human power, which is somewhat lacking in the modern world, with its quick material successes and its insolent belief in the boundless possibilities of progress. "He that loveth his life shall lose it"; and there is danger lest, through a too confident love of life, life itself should lose much of what gives it its highest worth. The submission which religion inculcates in action is essentially the same in spirit as that which science teaches in thought; and the ethical neutrality by which its victories have been achieved is the outcome of that submission." (renunciation)*

- "In Plato, the same twofold impulse exists, though the mystic impulse is distinctly the stronger of the two, and secures ultimate victory whenever the conflict is sharp. His description of the cave is the classical statement of belief in a knowledge and reality truer and more real than that of the senses..."
 - "...the greatest men who have been philosophers have felt the need both of science and of mysticism: the attempt to harmonise the two was what made their life, and what always must, for all its arduous uncertainty, make philosophy, to some minds, a greater thing than either science or religion."
 - "After Socrates has explained that there is an idea of the good, but not of such things as hair and mud and dirt, Parmenides advises him "not to despise even the meanest things," and this advice shows the genuine scientific temper." (except this is not the temper of most scientists today; this is originally the temper of the saint. The scientist would just be following in the saints footsteps)
 - "Reality, he says, is uncreated, indestructible, unchanging, indivisible; it is "immovable in the bonds of mighty chains, without beginning and without end; since coming into being and passing away have been driven afar, and true belief has cast them away."
 - "This is the negative side of the mystic's initiation: the doubt concerning common knowledge, preparing the way for the reception of what seems a higher wisdom."
 - "I believe, however, that the elimination of ethical considerations from philosophy is both scientifically necessary and—though this may seem a paradox—an ethical advance. Both these contentions must be briefly defended. The hope of satisfaction to our more human desires—the hope of demonstrating that the world has this or that desirable ethical characteristic—is not one which, so far as I can see, a scientific philosophy can do anything whatever to satisfy. The difference between a good world and a bad one is a difference in the particular characteristics of the particular things that exist in these worlds: it is not a sufficiently abstract difference to come within the province of philosophy."
 - "A truly scientific philosophy will be more humble, more piecemeal, more arduous, offering less glitter of outward mirage to flatter fallacious hopes, but more indifferent to fate, and more capable of accepting the world without the tyrannous imposition of our human and temporary demands."
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17. Albert Camus

- *"A man who has become conscious of the absurd is forever bound to it."*
- "It happens that the stage sets collapse. Rising, streetcar, four hours in the office or the factory, meal, streetcar, four hours of work, meal, sleep, and Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday and Saturday according to the same rhythm—this path is easily followed most of the time. But one day the "why" arises and everything begins in that weariness tinged with amazement. "Begins"—this is important. Weariness comes at the end of the acts of a mechanical life, but at the same time it inaugurates the impulse of consciousness. It awakens consciousness and provokes what follows. What follows is the gradual return into the chain or it is the definitive awakening. At the end of the awakening comes, in time, the consequence: suicide or recovery. In itself weariness has something sickening about it. Here, I must conclude that it is good."
- "Yet a day comes when a man notices or says that he is thirty. Thus he asserts his youth."

But simultaneously he situates himself in relation to time. He takes his place in it. He admits that he stands at a certain point on a curve that he acknowledges having to travel to its end. He belongs to time, and by the horror that seizes him, he recognizes his worst enemy. Tomorrow, he was longing for tomorrow, whereas everything in him ought to reject it. That revolt of the flesh is the absurd."

- "Men, too, secrete the inhuman. At certain moments of lucidity, the mechanical aspect of their gestures, their meaningless pantomime makes silly everything that surrounds them. A man is talking on the telephone behind a glass partition; you cannot hear him, but you see his incomprehensible dumb show: you wonder why he is alive."

- *"We must despair of ever reconstructing the familiar, calm surface which would give us peace of heart. After so many centuries of inquiries, so many abdications among thinkers, we are well aware that this is true for all our knowledge."*

- "Let us pause here. If I hold to be true that absurdity that determines my relationship with life, if I become thoroughly imbued with that sentiment that seizes me in face of the world's scenes, with that lucidity imposed on me by the pursuit of a science, I must sacrifice everything to these certainties and I must see them squarely to be able to maintain them. Above all, I must adapt my behavior to them and pursue them in all their consequences. I am speaking here of decency. But I want to know beforehand if thought can live in those deserts."

- *"Does not the failure reveal, beyond any possible explanation and interpretation, not the absence but the existence of transcendence?"* That existence which, suddenly and through a blind act of human confidence, explains everything, he defines as "the unthinkable unity of the general and the particular." *Thus the absurd becomes god* (in the broadest meaning of this word) and that inability to understand becomes the existence that illuminates everything. Nothing logically prepares this reasoning. I can call it a leap."

- "For him (Kierkegaard), too, antinomy and paradox become criteria of the religious. Thus, the very thing that led to despair of the meaning and depth of this life now gives it its truth and its clarity."

- "Nothing more profound, for example, than Kierkegaard's view according to which despair is not a fact but a state: the very state of sin. For sin is what alienates from God. The absurd, which is the metaphysical state of the conscious man, does not lead to God."

- "Kierkegaard may shout in warning: "If man had no eternal consciousness, if, at the bottom of everything, there were merely a wild, seething force producing everything, both large and trifling, in the storm of dark passions, if the bottomless void that nothing can fill underlay all things, what would life be but despair?" This cry is not likely to stop the absurd man.

- Seeking what is true is not seeking what is desirable. If in order to elude the anxious question: "What would life be?" one must, like the donkey, feed on the roses of illusion, then the absurd mind, rather than resigning itself to falsehood, prefers to adopt fearlessly Kierkegaard's reply: "despair." Everything considered, a determined soul will always manage." (me- wrong again)

- *"Suicide, like the leap, is acceptance at its extreme. Everything is over and man returns to his essential history."*

- *"The absurd man thus catches sight of a burning and frigid, transparent and limited universe in which nothing is possible but everything is given, and beyond which all is collapse and nothingness. He can then decide to accept such a universe and draw from it his strength, his refusal to hope, and the unyielding evidence of a life without consolation."*

- "The workman of today works everyday in his life at the same tasks, and his fate is no less absurd. But it is tragic only at the rare moments when it becomes conscious."
 - *"Thus, for Chestov acceptance of the absurd is contemporaneous with the absurd itself. Being aware of it amounts to accepting it, and the whole logical effort of his thought is to bring it out so that at the same time the tremendous hope it involves may burst forth. Let me repeat that this attitude is legitimate."*
 - *"...like those of Kafka, Kierkegaard, or Chestov...They embrace the God that consumes them. It is through humility that hope enters in. For the absurd of this existence assures them a little more of supernatural reality. If the course of this life leads to God, there is an outcome after all."*
 - "Within the limits of the human condition, what greater hope than the hope that allows an escape from that condition? As I see once more, existential thought in this regard (and contrary to current opinion) is steeped in a vast hope."
 - "(Kafka) His work is universal (a really absurd work is not universal) to the extent to which it represents the emotionally moving face of a man fleeing humanity, deriving from his contradictions reasons for believing, reasons for hoping from his fecund despairs, and calling life his terrifying apprenticeship in death. It is universal because its inspiration is religious."
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18. Emile Cioran

On the Heights of Despair

- "why can't we stay closed up inside ourselves? why do we chase after expression and form, trying to deliver ourselves of our precious contents or "meanings," desperately attempting to organize what is after all a rebellious and chaotic process? wouldn't it be more creative simply to surrender to our inner fluidity without any intention of objectifying it, intimately and voluptuously soaking in our own inner turmoil and struggle? then we would feel with much richer intensity the whole inner growth of spiritual experience all kinds of insights would blend and flourish in a fertile effervescence. a sensation of actuality and spiritual content would be born, like the rise of a wave or a musical phrase. to be full of one's self, not in the sense of pride, but of enrichment, to be tormented by a sense of *inner infinity*..."
(me- Molinos says this almost exactly)
- "only a few can endure such experiences to the end. there is always a serious danger in repressing something which requires objectification, in locking up explosive energy, because there comes a moment when one can not restrain such overwhelming power. and then the fall is from too much plenitude. there are experiences and obsessions one cannot live with. salvation lies in confessing them. the terrifying experience of death, when preserved in consciousness, becomes ruinous. if you talk about death, you save part of yourself. but at the same time, something of your real self dies, because objectified meanings lose the actuality they have in consciousness."
- "the deepest subjective experiences are also the most universal, because through them one reaches the original source of life. *true interiorization leads to a universality inaccessible to those who remain on the periphery.*"

- "the vulgar interpretation of universality calls it a phenomenon of quantitative expansion rather than a qualitatively rich containment. such an interpretation sees lyricism as a peripheral and inferior phenomenon, the product of spiritual inconsistency, failing to notice that the lyrical resources of subjectivity show remarkable freshness and depth. there are people who become lyrical only at crucial moments in their life; some only in the throes of death, when their entire past suddenly appears before them and hits them with the force of a waterfall. many become lyrical after some decisively critical experience, when the turmoil of their inner being reaches paroxysm. thus people who are normally inclined toward objectivity and impersonality, strangers both to themselves and to reality, once they become prisoners of love, experience feelings which actualize all their personal resources. the fact that almost everybody writes poetry when in love proves that the resources of conceptual thinking are too poor to express their inner infinity; inner lyricism finds adequate objectification only through fluid, irrational material." (a great description of Tillich's ideas of Religious Symbolism)

- "the experience of suffering is a similar case. you never suspected what lay hidden in yourself and in the world, you were living contentedly at the periphery of things, when suddenly those feelings of suffering which are second only to death itself take hold of you and transport you into a region of infinite complexity, where your subjectivity tosses about in a maelstrom. to be lyrical from suffering means to achieve that inner purification in which wounds cease to be mere outer manifestations without deep complications and begin to participate in the essence of your being."

- "there is no authentic lyricism without a grain of interior madness. it is significant that the beginnings of all mental psychoses are marked by a lyrical phase during which all the usual barriers and limits disappear, giving way to an inner drunkenness of the most fertile, creative kind."

- "the lyrical state is a state beyond forms and systems."

- "how distant everything is! i don't understand why we must do things in this world, why we must have friends and aspirations, hopes and dreams. wouldn't it be better to retreat to a faraway corner of the world, where all its noise and complications would be heard no more? Then we could renounce culture and ambitions; we would lose everything and gain nothing; for what is there to be gained from this world? there are people to whom gain is unimportant, who are hopelessly unhappy and lonely. we are so closed to one another! and yet, were we to be totally open to each other, reading into the depths of our souls, how much of our destiny would we see? We are so lonely in life that we must ask ourselves if the loneliness of dying is not a symbol of our human existence. can there be any consolation at the last moment? this willingness to live and die in society is a mark of great deficiency. it is a thousand times preferable to die somewhere alone and abandoned so that you can die without melodramatic posturing, unseen by anyone. i despise people who on their death bed master themselves and adopt a pose in order to impress. tears do not burn except in solitude. those who ask to be surrounded by friends when they die do so out of fear and inability to live their final moments alone. they want to for get death at the moment of death. they lack infinite heroism. why don't they lock their door and suffer those maddening sensations with a lucidity and a fear beyond all limits? we are so isolated from everything! but isn't everything equally inaccessible to us? the deepest and most organic death is death in solitude, when even light becomes a principle of death. *in such moments you will be severed from life, from love, smiles, friends and even from death. and you will ask yourself if there is*

anything besides the nothingness of the world and your own nothingness." (Would Tillich agree with this?)

- "on not wanting to live. there are experiences which one cannot survive, after which one feels that there is no meaning left in anything. once you have reached the limits of life, having lived to extremity all that is offered at those dangerous borders, the everyday gesture and the usual aspiration lose their seductive charm." (Bach is needed, right Heisman?)

- "the most terrifying intensification bursts into nothingness. you grow inside, you dilate madly until there are no boundaries left, you reach the edge of light, where light is stolen by night, and from that plenitude as in a savage whirlwind you are thrown straight into nothingness."

- "at the edge of life everything is an occasion for death...every experience is in this case a leap into nothingness."

- "did not all the mystics feel that they could not live after their great ecstasies? what could they expect from this world, those who sense, beyond the normal limits, life, loneliness, despair, death?"

- "the passion for the absurd. there are no arguments. Can anyone who has reached the limit bother with arguments, causes, effects, moral considerations, and so forth? of course not. for such a person there are only unmotivated motives for living. *on the heights of despair, the passion for the absurd is the only thing that can still throw a demonic light on chaos. When all the current reasons - moral, esthetic, religious, social, and so on - no longer guide one's life, how can one sustain life without succumbing to nothingness? Only by a connection with the absurd, by love of absolute uselessness, loving something which does not have substance but which simulates an illusion of life.*" (sounds like Tillich's concrete religious symbols)

- "i feel i must burst because of all that life offers me and because of the prospect of death. i feel that i am dying of solitude, of love, of despair, of hatred, of all that this world offers me. with every experience i expand like a balloon blown up beyond its capacity. the most terrifying intensification bursts into nothingness."

- "i live because the mountains do not laugh and the worms do not sing. the passion for the absurd can grow only in a man who has exhausted everything, yet is still capable of undergoing awesome transfigurations. *for one who has lost everything there is nothing left in life except the passion of the absurd.*"

- "what else in life could still move such a person? what seductions? some say: self-sacrifice for humanity, the public good, the cult of the beautiful, and so forth. i like only those people who have done away with all that - even for a short time. only they have lived in an absolute manner. only they have the right to speak about life."

- "*only the sick man is delighted by life and praises it so that he won't collapse.*"

- "true solitude is the feeling of being absolutely isolated between the earth and the sky. nothing should detract attention from these phenomena of absolute isolation: a fearfully lucid intuition will reveal the entire drama of man's finite nature facing the infinite nothingness of the world. solitary walks - extremely fertile and dangerous at the same time, for the inner life - must take place in such a way that nothing will obscure the solitary's meditation on man's isolation in the world. Solitary walks are propitious to an intense process of interiorization especially in the evening, when none of the usual seductions can steal one's interest. then revelations about the world spring from the deepest corner of

the spirit, from the place where it has detached itself from life, from the wound of life. to achieve spirituality, one must be very lonely. so much death-in-life and so many inner conflagrations."

- "I am: therefore the world is meaningless." (Ha! how many times has this been said out loud?)

- "life is the privilege of mediocre people. only mediocrities live at life's normal temperature; the others are consumed at temperatures at which life can not endure, at which they can barely breathe, already one foot beyond life."

- *"i propose the agony method to rid you of all these imperfections. apply it to every generation and its effects will soon be evident. maybe in this way i too could become useful to mankind!*

bring every man to the agony of life's last moments by whip, fire, or injections, and through terrible torture he will undergo the great purification afforded by a vision of death. then free him and let him run in a fright until he falls exhausted. i warrant you that the effect is incomparably greater than any obtained through normal means. if i could, i would drive the entire world to agony to achieve a radical purification of life; i would set a fire burning insidiously at the roots of life, not to destroy them but to give them a new and different sap, a new heat. the fire i would set to the world would not bring ruin but cosmic transfiguration. in this way life would adjust to higher temperatures and would cease to be an environment propitious to mediocrity. and maybe in this dream, death too would cease to be immanent in life." (take psychedelics correctly, Mckenna)

- "i'm speaking of a precise painful sensation, not a vague and undetermined one. as in a hallucinatory dream, you feel that only your head is left, without foundation and support, without a body."

- "it is a weariness which consumes and destroys. no effort, no hope, no illusion can satisfy you any longer. shocked witless by your own catastrophe, unable to think or to act, caught in cold and heavy darkness, solitary as in moments of profound regret, you have reached the negative limit of life, its absolute temperature, where the last illusions about life freeze."

- "i call agonic only those dramatic moments in the battle between life and death when the presence of death is experienced consciously and painfully. true agony occurs when you pass into nothingness through death, when a feeling of weariness consumes you irrevocably and death wins. in every true agony there is a triumph of death, even though you may continue to live after those moments of weariness. there is nothing imaginary in this turmoil. every agony bears a conclusive stamp. *isn't agony similar to an incurable sickness which torments us intermittently (me- Sickness Unto Death)?* agonic moments chart the progress of death in life, revealing a drama in our consciousness caused by the disruption of the balance between life and death. such moments are not possible except in *that sensation of weariness which brings life down to its absolute negative value."*

- "i want to die but I am sorry that I want to die. this is the feeling experienced by those who abandon themselves to nothingness." (Kierkegaard, Tillich *courage to be* pg 11)

- "how good it would be if one could die by throwing oneself into an infinite void!"

- "the complexity of the grotesque born out of despair resides in its capacity to indicate an inner infinity and to produce a paroxysm of the highest tension."

- "it is evident to *anyone who understands the multiple forms of inner drama that the grotesque hides secret tragedies, indirectly expressed. whoever has seen his face grotesquely disfigured can never forget it, because he will always be afraid of himself."*

- "one loses one's sense of security and the normal sensation of the immediate and the concrete."

- "the truly awful thing in madness is that we sense a total and irrevocable loss of life while we are still living."
- "in death one loses everything, by a fall into nothingness. that is why the fear of death is persistent and essential, but actually less strange than the fear of madness, in which our semi-presence creates an anxiety more complex than the organic fear of the total nothingness of death. but wouldn't madness be an escape from the misery of life?"
- "i would like instead a shower of warm light to fall from me, transfiguring the entire world, an unecstatic burst of light preserving the calm of luminous eternity. far from the concentrations of ecstasy, it would be all graceful lightness and smiling warmth. The entire world should float in this dream of light, in this transparent and unreal state of delight. *obstacles and matter, form and limits would cease to exist.* then let me die of light in such a landscape."
- "there are questions which, once approached, either isolate you or kill you outright. afterward you have nothing more to lose. from then on, your erstwhile "serious" pursuits- your spiritual quest for more varied forms of life, your limitless longing for inaccessible things, your elevated frustration with the limits of empiricism- all become simple manifestations of an excessively exuberant sensibility, lacking the profound seriousness which characterizes the man who has penetrated the realm of dangerous mysteries."
- "only the organic and existential thinker is capable of this kind of seriousness, because truth for him is alive, *born from inner agony and organic disorder rather than useless speculation.* out of the shadow of the abstract man, who thinks for the pleasure of thinking, emerges the organic man, who thinks because of a vital imbalance, and who is beyond science and art." (Huxley said this about art, I find philosophy to be 'useless speculation, rather than a concern about the Truth of existence)
- "to step into death does not mean, as commonly believed, especially by christians, to draw one's last breath and to pass into a region qualitatively different from life. *it means, rather, to discover in the course of life the way toward death and to find in life's vital signs the immanent abyss of death.*"
- "*but why is the experience of agony so rare? Can it be that our hypothesis is entirely false and that sketching a metaphysics of death is possible only by accepting death's transcendental nature?*"
- "from a grave perspective, every step in life is a step into death and memory is only the sign of nothingness. *the average man, deprived of metaphysical understanding,* does not have this consciousness of progressive advance into death, though neither he nor anyone else can escape its inexorable destiny. but when consciousness becomes independent of life, the revelation of death becomes so strong that its presence destroys all naivet  , all joyful enthusiasm, and all natural voluptuousness. to have the consciousness of death is something perverse and extremely corrupt. the naive poetry of life, its seductions and charms, appear empty of content. *equally empty are man's finalizing projects and his theological illusions.*"
- "*whoever has not experienced the awful agony of death, rising and spreading like a surge of blood, like the choking grasp of a snake which provokes terrifying hallucinations, does not know the demonic character of life and the state of inner effervescence from which great transfigurations arise. such a state of black drunkenness is a necessary prerequisite to understanding why one wishes the immediate end of this world.*"
- "happy the man who could abandon himself to this becoming and could absorb all the possibilities offered each moment, ignoring the agonizingly problematic evaluation

which discovers in every moment an insurmountable relativity."

- "the revelation of death's immanence in life occurs during illnesses and long depressive states. there are, of course, other ways, but they are accidental and individual, and do not have the same potential for revelation as illness or depression."

- "only those who truly suffer are capable of genuine content and infinite seriousness...there are many who would gladly give up metaphysical revelations, obtained through despair, agony, and death, in exchange for a naive love or the voluptuous unconsciousness of dance."

- "these states, in which separation from the world steadily and painfully increases, bring man closer to his inner reality and cause him to discover death in his own subjectivity. a growing interiority progresses toward the essential center of subjectivity, overcoming all the social forms which usually mask it. once beyond this center, progressive interiority discovers the region where life mingles with death, where man has not yet detached himself from the primary sources of existence, where the demonic rhythm of life works with complete irrationality. in cases of depression, the awareness of death's immanence in life creates an atmosphere of constant dissatisfaction and restlessness that can never be appeased."

- "the fear of death, which is nothing but the fear of the nothingness into which death throws us, proves that death presupposes nothingness."

- "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 naive faith."

- "those who try to eliminate the fear of death through artificial reasoning are totally mistaken, because it is impossible to cancel an organic fear by way of abstract constructs. whoever seriously considers the question of death must be afraid. Even those who believe in eternity do so because they are afraid of death. there is in their faith a painful effort to save - even without an absolute certitude- the world of values in which they live and to which they contribute, an effort to defeat the nothingness inherent in the temporal and attain the universal in eternity. Death met without religious faith leaves nothing standing."

- "yet other philosophies and doctrines say almost nothing about death. the only valid attitude is absolute silence or a cry of despair. some people maintain that the fear of death does not have a deeper justification, because as long as there is an i there is no death, and once dead there is no i any longer. these people have forgotten about the very strange phenomenon of gradual agony. what comfort does this artificial distinction between the i and death offer a man who has a strong premonition of death? what meaning can logical argument or subtle thought have for someone deeply imbued with a feeling of the irrevocable? all attempts to bring existential questions onto a logical plane are null and void. philosophers are too proud to confess their fear of death and too supercilious to acknowledge the spiritual fecundity of illness. their reflections on death exhibit a hypocritical serenity; in fact, they tremble with fear more than anyone else. one should not forget that philosophy is the art of masking inner torments."

- "the art of dying cannot be learned, because there is no technique, there are no rules. the irrevocability of agony is experienced by each individual alone, through infinite and intense suffering. most people are unaware of the slow agony within themselves. for them there is only one kind of agony, the one immediately preceding the fall into absolute nothingness. only such moments of agony bring about important existential revelations in consciousness. that is why they expect

everything from the end instead of trying to grasp the meaning of a slow revelatory agony. the end will reveal too little, and they will die as ignorant as they have lived."

- *"isn't nothingness, then, salvation? but how can there be salvation in nothingness? if salvation is nearly impossible through existence, how can it be possible through the complete absence of existence? since there is no salvation either in existence or in nothingness, let this world with its eternal laws be smashed to pieces."*

- *"the sensation of expansion toward nothingness present in melancholy has its roots in a weariness characteristic of all negative states. this weariness separates man from the world. life's intense rhythm, its organic inner pulse, weakens. weariness is the first organic determinant of knowledge. because it creates the necessary conditions for man's differentiation from the world, weariness leads one to the perspective which places the world in front of man."*

- *"man grows wings in melancholy not in order to enjoy the world but in order to be alone. what is the meaning of loneliness in melancholy? isn't it related to the feeling of interior and exterior infinity?"*

- *"melancholy detachment removes man from his natural surroundings. his outlook on infinity shows him to be lonely and forsaken. the sharper our consciousness of the world's infinity, the more acute our awareness of our own finitude. in some states this awareness is painfully depressing, but in melancholy it is less tormenting and sometimes even rather voluptuous.*

the disparity between the world's infinity and man's finitude is a serious cause for despair; but when one looks at this disparity in states of melancholy, it ceases to be painful and the world appears endowed with a strange, sickly beauty."

- *"nothing is important. how important can it be that i suffer and think? My presence in this world will disturb a few tranquil lives and will unsettle the unconscious and pleasant naiveté of others. although i feel that my tragedy is the greatest in history- greater than the fall of empires - i am nevertheless aware of my total insignificance. i am absolutely persuaded that i am nothing in this universe; yet i feel that mine is the only real existence. if i had to choose between the world and me, i would reject the world, its lights and laws, unafraid to glide alone in absolute nothingness. although life for me is torture, i cannot renounce it, because i do not believe in the absolute values in whose name i would sacrifice myself."*

- *"i wonder whether a truly metaphysical feeling is even possible without the disappearance of superficial forms? one reaches the center of life only by purifying it of contingent and accidental elements."*

- *"metaphysical existentialism is born out of ecstasy in front of the world's primordial origins; it is the ultimate intoxication, ecstatic bliss in the contemplation of essence."*

- *"i see a form of madness, not of knowledge, in the ecstasy of life's ultimate origins. You cannot experience it except in solitude, when you feel as if you were floating above the world. solitude is the proper milieu for madness. it is noteworthy that even the skeptic can experience this kind of ecstasy. does not the madness of ecstasy reveal itself through this odd combination of certitude and essence with doubt and despair?"*

- *"the world in which nothing is solved. to doubt and yet to live - this is a paradox, though not a tragic one, since doubt is less intense, less consuming, than despair. abstract doubt, in which one participates only partially, is more frequent, whereas in despair one participates totally and organically. not even the most organic and serious forms of doubt ever reach the intensity of despair. in comparison with*

despair, skepticism is characterized by a certain amount of dilettantism and superficiality. i can doubt everything, i may very well smile contemptuously at the world, but this will not prevent me from eating, from sleeping peacefully, and from marrying. in despair, whose depth one can fathom only by experiencing it, such actions are possible only with great effort. On the heights of despair, nobody has the right to sleep. thus a genuinely desperate man cannot forget his own tragedy: his consciousness preserves the painful actuality of his subjective torment. doubt is anxiety about problems and things, and has its origins in the unsolvable nature of all big questions. if such questions could be solved, the skeptic would revert to more normal states. The condition of the desperate man in this respect is utterly different: if all

problems were solved, he would not be any less anxious, since his anxiety arises out of his own subjective existence. Despair is the state in which anxiety and restlessness are immanent to existence. nobody in despair suffers from problems, but from his own inner torment and fire. it's a pity that nothing can be solved in this world. yet there never was and there never will be anyone who would commit suicide for this reason."

- "one must descend all the circles of an inner hell to turn one's destiny into a subjective yet universal problem." (Kierkegaard)

- "only great and dangerous contradictions betoken a rich spiritual life, because only they constitute a mode of realization for life's abundant inner flow. people who know only a few spiritual states and never live on the edge do not have contradictions, because their limited resources cannot form oppositions."

- "rich spiritual life must know chaos and the effervescent paroxysm of illness, because in them inspiration appears to be essential for creation and contradictions become expressions of high inner temperatures. nobody who does not love chaos is a creator, and whoever is contemptuous of illness must not speak of the spirit."

- "I know nothing more disgusting than death...it is ironic that one fears it the more one admires it. i must confess that i admire death's negativity. it is the only thing i can admire and yet not love. its grandeur and infinity impress me, but my despair is so vast that i don't even harbor the hope of death. how could i love death? one can only write about it in contradictory ways. whoever says that he knows something definite about death shows that he has not even a premonition, although he bears it within himself. every man bears with him not only his life but also his death."

- "an observation which, to my great regret, is always verifiable: only those are happy who never think or, rather, who only think about life's bare necessities, and to think about such things means not to think at all. true thinking resembles a demon who muddies the spring of life or a sickness which corrupts its roots. to think all the time, to raise questions, to doubt your own destiny, to feel the weariness of living, to be worn out to the point of exhaustion by thoughts and life..." (Ha!)

- "i might become an animal who knows the history of philosophy. as to becoming superman, that seems to me utter and ridiculous folly. could there be a solution, approximate of course, in a sort of superconsciousness? couldn't one live beyond (not just on this side, toward animality) all complex forms of consciousness, anxiety, agony, in a sphere of life where access to eternity would no longer be pure myth?"

- "what should i do? work for a social and political system, make a girl miserable? hunt for weaknesses in philosophical systems, fight for moral and esthetic ideals? it's all too little." (me- Renunciation)

- *"beyond present-day common ideals and forms, one might breathe in a superconsciousness where the intoxication of eternity would do away with the qualms of this world, and where being would be just as pure and immaterial as nonbeing."*
- *"to live in a bath of fire, transfigured by its rich glow – such is the state of immaterial purity where one is nothing but a dancing flame. freed from the laws of gravity, life becomes illusion or dream."*
- *"not everybody loses their innocence: therefore not everybody is unhappy...disintegration implies total loss of innocence, that lovely gift destroyed by knowledge, life's enemy."*
- *"innocence is delight in natural charm...there are only two fundamental attitudes: the naive and the heroic...innocence is no longer an option, so there only remains heroism. incapable of fulfillment and happiness... to be a hero - in the most universal sense of the word means to aspire to absolute triumph. but such triumphs come only through death. heroism means transcending life; it is a fatal leap into nothingness, even though the hero may not be aware that his energy springs from a life deprived of its normal supports. all that is innocence, and does not lead to it, belongs to nothingness. can one speak of the seductions of nothingness? if we do, we must add that they are much too mysterious to penetrate."*
- *"spirit in life is an anomaly. i have renounced so much, why should i not renounce spirit as well? but besides being an illness of life, is not renunciation first and foremost an illness of the spirit?"*
- *"i do not know what is right and what is wrong; what is allowed and what is not; i cannot judge and i cannot praise. there are no valid criteria and no consistent principles in the world...it surprises me that some people still concern themselves with a theory of knowledge. to tell the truth, i couldn't care less about the relativity of knowledge, simply because the world does not deserve to be known. at times i feel as if i had total knowledge, exhausting the content of this world; at other times the world around me does not make any sense."*
- *"the feeling of cosmic loneliness, on the other hand, stems not so much from man's subjective agony as from an awareness of the world's isolation, of objective nothingness. it is as if all the splendors of this world were to vanish at once, leaving behind the dull monotony of a cemetery."*
- *"how i would love one day to see all people, young and old, sad or happy, men and women, married or not, serious or superficial leave their homes and their work places, relinquish their duties and responsibilities, gather in the streets and refuse to do anything anymore. at that moment, let slaves to senseless work, who have been toiling for future generations under the dire delusion that they contribute to the good of humanity, avenge themselves on the mediocrity of a sterile and insignificant life, on the tremendous waste that never permitted spiritual transfiguration." (Karma Yoga, Maya)*
- *"let ideals be declared void; beliefs, trifles; art, a lie; and philosophy, a joke." (Nihilism, Renunciation)*
- *"the feeling of utter confusion! not to be able to differentiate, clarify, understand, or appreciate! such a feeling would make any philosopher a poet, but not all philosophers experience it the feeling of utter confusion! not to be able to differentiate, clarify, understand, or appreciate! Such a feeling would make any philosopher a poet, but not all philosophers experience it with significant and durable intensity, for if they did, they could no longer philosophize abstractly and rigidly. How a philosopher becomes a poet is like a drama. you fall from a world of abstractions into a whirlwind of feelings, into all the fantastic shapes and figures entangled in the soul. how could the actor of a complicated drama of the soul in*

which, all at once, erotic anticipation clashes with metaphysical anxiety, fear of death with desire for innocence, total renunciation with paradoxical heroism despair with pride, forebodings of madness with longings for anonymity, screams with silence, aspiration with nothingness *how could he still go on philosophizing in a systematic way?* There are men who started in the world of abstract forms and ended in absolute confusion. therefore they can only philosophize poetically. in the state of absolute confusion, only the delights and torments of madness still matter."

- "grace is an illusory state in which life negates its antinomies and transcends its demonic dialectic, in which contradictions, fatality, and the consciousness of the irrevocable temporarily vanish...transcending negativity is the essential characteristic of grace."

- "only sickness gives birth to serious and deep feelings."

- "he who has not experienced absolute fear, universal anxiety, cannot understand struggle, the madness of the flesh and of death."

- "*a graceful sense of existence does not lead to metaphysical revelations, to a vision of truth, to the sense of an ending which poisons every moment of life.*"

- "pity is not only inefficient; it is also insulting. and besides, how can you pity another when you yourself suffer ignominiously."

- "even today nobody can tell what is right or what is wrong...since reality is essentially irrational, why set rules, why distinguish the right from the wrong? morality cannot be saved; it's a mistake to believe otherwise. *yet there are those who maintain that in this world pleasure and sin are minor satisfactions which enjoy only a brief triumph and that only good deeds partake of eternity. they pretend that at the end of this world's misery, goodness and virtue will win but they have failed to see that, if eternity obliterates superficial pleasures, it does the same with virtue, good deeds, and moral actions. eternity does not lead to the triumph of either good or evil; it ravages all.*" (me- Exactly! Ha! Vivekananda- maya, Tillich- doubt as being an intrinsic part of true faith, Kierkegaard and how the infinite scared him, how St. Therese said that thoughts concerning the Infinite brought on even deeper anguish)

- "it is silly to condemn the epicureans in the name of eternity. how is suffering rather than pleasure going to make me immortal? from a purely objective point of view, is there any significant difference between one man's agony and another's pleasure? whether you suffer or not, nothingness will swallow you forever." (Maya)

- "the experience of eternity therefore depends on intensity of subjective feeling, and the way to eternity is to transcend the temporal...*every experience of eternity presupposes a leap and a transfiguration, and few and far between are those capable of the tension necessary to arrive at the blissful contemplation of the eternal.*"

- "time with its long train of individual moments is, if not unreal, irrelevant...without temporality, life loses its dramatic character...the experience of the eternity is void of life."

- "why should i live in history, or worry about the social and cultural problems of the age?

i am weary of culture and history; i can no longer bring myself to embrace its torments and its aspirations. *We must outstrip history, and we can do so only when past, present, and future cease to be important, when where and when we live becomes a matter of indifference...since there is no hierarchy of life-styles, everybody and nobody is right all at the same time...mankind's achievements could very well be great, but i do not care to know them. I take greater comfort in the contemplation of eternity. in this*

world not worth so much as a breath, the only valid relation is that between man and eternity, not between man and history."

- "by outstripping history, one acquires superconsciousness, an important ingredient of eternity. it takes you into the realm where contradictions and doubts lose their meaning, where you forget about life and death. it is the fear of death that launches men on their quest for eternity..."

- "man tends to monopolize tragedy and suffering in the world: that's why salvation for him is a burning insoluble question. i am not proud to be a man, because i know only too well what it is to be man. Only those who have not experienced this state intensely are proud of it, because they intend to become men. their delight is natural: there are among men some who are not far above plants or animals, and therefore aspire to humanity. but those who know what it means to be man long to be anything but."

- "magic is useful for small and inessential things, but powerless when confronted with metaphysical reality, which requires, most of the time, silence, something magical sensitivity is incapable of. to live with an acute consciousness of fatality, of one's own impotence in the face of life's great problems, which you cannot even pose without tragically implicating yourself in existence, means to engage directly the capital question of life, that of inaccessible and unknowable infinity."

- "you pretend that despair and agony are only preliminaries, that ideally one should overcome them if one is not to become an automaton. you think joy is the only means of salvation and you despise all others? You call the obsession with agony selfishness and find generous impulses only in joy? you offer us this joy; but how can we receive it from the outside? as long as it does not spring from our inner resources, help from the outside is quite useless. how easy it is to recommend joy to those who cannot be joyful! do all those who are so eager to promote joy realize what it means to feel and fear madness closing in, to live all your life with the tormenting presentiment of madness, to which is added the even more persistent and certain consciousness of death?"

- "let us live the agony fully; let us live our inner tragedy absolutely and frenetically to the very end."

- "...there is no true or false, only our spontaneous reactions."

- "isn't intense subjectivity the way to attain universality, exactly as one enters eternity through the instant? men value solitude so little! they condemn the sterility of all that it has produced and give praise exclusively to social values, for they cherish the illusion that they have all contributed to their creation. they all aspire to great achievements through which they hope to attain immortality. as if they will not crumble into dust!" (even Bach will be lost)

- "the enthusiast's ability to be constantly reborn raises him above life's demoniacal temptations, the fear of nothingness, and the torments of agony. his life has no tragic dimension, because enthusiasm is the only form of life totally opaque to death. even grace - so similar to enthusiasm- has less of this irrational ignorance of death. grace is full of melancholy charm; not so enthusiasm. my tremendous admiration for enthusiasts stems from my inability to comprehend how there can be such men in a world where death, nothingness, sadness, and despair keep sinister company. It makes one wonder, to see people who are never desperate."

- "the enthusiast is preeminently an unproblematic person. he understands many things without ever knowing the agonizing doubts and the chaotic sensitivity of the problematic man. the latter cannot solve anything, because nothing satisfies him. you will find in him neither the enthusiast's gift of abandon, his naive irrationality, nor the charming paradox of love in its purest state."

- *"the biblical myth of knowledge as sin is the most profound myth ever invented. the enthusiast's euphoria is due to the fact that he is unaware of the tragedy of knowledge. why not say it? true knowledge is the most tenebrous darkness."*
- *"the height of ecstasy is the final sensation, in which you feel you are dying because of all this light and darkness. especially weird is the fact that ecstasy wipes out surrounding objects, familiar forms of the world, until all that is left is a monumental projection of shadow and light. it is hard to explain how this selection and purification takes place, why these immaterial shadows hold such sway over us. how can we help attributing an absolute character to light and darkness when they are all that is left of the world's ecstasy? the frequency with which ecstasy occurs in oriental religions, as well as in other forms of mysticism at all times, proves the rightness of our hypothesis. the absolute is inside oneself, not outside, and ecstasy, this paroxysm of interiority, reveals only inner shadows and glimmers of light. next to them, the charm of light and day fades quickly. ecstasy partakes of essence to such an extent that it gives an impression of metaphysical hallucination. pure essences, grasped through ecstasy, are immaterial, but their immateriality causes vertigo and obsession from which you cannot free yourself except by converting them into metaphysical principles."*
- *"so you witnessed old age, pain, and death and told yourself that pleasure is an illusion and that the pleasure seekers do not understand the inconstancy of things. then you shunned the world, persuaded that nothing will endure. "i will not return," you proclaimed, "before i have escaped birth, old age, and death." there is much pride and suffering in every renunciation. instead of retreating discreetly, without a big show of revolt and hatred, you denounce, emphatically and haughtily, others' ignorance and illusions; you condemn their pleasures. the ascetics, who renounced life and fled into the desert, were convinced that they had overcome all human weaknesses. the belief that they had access to a subjective eternity gave them the illusion of total liberation. nonetheless, their condemnation of pleasure and their contempt for humanity betray their inability to actually free themselves. were i to withdraw into the most fearsome desert, renounce everything, and live in absolute solitude, still i would never dream of despising men and their pleasure. since i cannot really enter eternity through renunciation and solitude, since i shall die like the rest, why despise them, why call my way the only true one? all the great prophets lack discretion and human understanding. i witness pain, old age, death, and i know that they cannot be overcome; but why should i spoil another's enjoyment with my knowledge? suffering and the consciousness of its inescapability lead to renunciation; yet nothing would induce me, not even if i were to become a leper, to condemn another's joy. there is much envy in every act of condemnation. Buddhism and christianity are the revenge and the spite of those who suffer." (Ha!)*
- *"the thought of renunciation is so bitter that it is hard to imagine how man ever came to conceive of it. he who in a moment of despair has not experienced a cold shiver, a sensation of ineluctable abandonment, cosmic death, and individual nothingness, has not experienced the terrifying preliminaries of renunciation."*
- *"not living under the fierce desert sun, with just that one thought about eternity, are we to become saints with roofs over our heads?"*
- *"a world full of philosophers, what a terrifying prospect! they should be all wiped out so that life could go on naturally – blindly and irrationally. i hate the wisdom of these men unmoved by truths, who do not suffer with their nerves, their flesh, and their blood. i like only vital, organic truths, the offspring*

of our anxiety. those whose thoughts are alive are always right; there are no arguments against them. and even if there were, they would not last long. i wonder how there can still be men searching for the truth. do wise men not yet understand that truth cannot be?" (Taoism, Sean Carroll and others discussing the multi-verse without any discomfort whatsoever)

- "once you've negated everything and done away completely with all forms of existence, once nothing can survive in the path of your negativity, who can you turn to, laughing or crying, if not your own self? once you have witnessed the fall of the entire world, there is nothing left but for you to fall too. the infinite character of irony cancels all of life's contents. i'm not speaking here of elegant, refined irony, born of a sense of superficial pride and superiority - the irony some use to show off their detachment from the world - but of the tragic, bitter irony of despair. *genuine irony replaces tears, convulsions, or even a grotesque and criminal grin.*"

- "the essence of social life is injustice." (me- very Earthly reflections on "poverty")

- "...infinity, both in time and space, leads to nothing. how can we accomplish anything in the future when we have behind us an eternity in which nothing was accomplished? if the world had had any meaning, it would have been revealed to us by now and we would know it. how can i continue to believe that it will be disclosed in the future when it has not been made manifest yet? but the world has no meaning; irrational at the core, it is, moreover, infinite. meaning is conceivable only in a finite world, where one can reach something, where there are limits to stop our regression, clear points of reference, where history moves toward a goal envisioned by the theory of progress."

- "to live infinity, as well as to meditate a long time upon it, is the most terrifying lesson in anarchy and revolt one can ever learn. *infinity shakes you to the roots of your being, disorganizes you, but it also makes you forget the petty, the contingent, and the insignificant.*"

- "*how fortunate that, having lost all our hopes, we can still leap into infinity, dive into boundlessness, participate in the universal anarchy of its whirlwind!*"

- "absolute becoming, infinity destroys anything that is formed, crystallized, or finished. isn't music the art which best expresses infinity because it dissolves all forms into a charmingly ineffable fluidity."

- "i have always wondered why those who have produced masterpieces in these domains have not all gone mad. music more than any other art requires so much concentration that one could easily, after creative moments, lose one's mind. all great composers ought to either commit suicide or become insane at the height of their creative powers. are not all those aspiring to infinity on the road to madness? normality, abnormality, are notions that no longer mean anything. let us live in the ecstasy of infinity, let us love that which is boundless, let us destroy forms..."

- "*since i will not die right away, nor regain my innocence, going through the same routine motions every day is sheer madness. banality must be overcome at all costs and the way cleared for transfiguration. how sad to see men bypass themselves, neglect their own destiny instead of rekindling the light they carry within them or getting drunk on their abysmal darkness!*" (Tillich, Tolstoy, inward)

- "why not abandon this futile work and begin anew without repeating the same wasteful mistake? is subjective consciousness of eternity not enough? it is the feeling for eternity that the frenetic activity and trepidation of work has destroyed in us. work is the negation of eternity. *the more goods we acquire in the temporal realm, the more intense our external work, the less accessible and farther removed is eternity.*"

- *"hence the limited perspective of active and energetic people, the banality of their thought and actions. i am not contrasting work to either passive contemplation or vague dreaminess, but to an unrealizable transfiguration; nevertheless, i prefer an intelligent and observant laziness to intolerable, terrorizing activity. to awaken the modern world, one must praise laziness. the lazy man has an infinitely keener perception of metaphysical reality than the active one."* (me- non-movement, Saints are Conquerors, Underhill thinks Quietism is misconstrued as 'laziness' when in fact it's an undying participation with the Nothingness)

- *"sadness, the inebriation and excitement of last moments. is not everything final? what is the anxiety of nothingness if not the perverse joy of our final sadness, our exalted love for the eternity of nothingness and the transience of existence? can it really be that for us existence means exile, and nothingness, home? i must struggle against myself, fly into a rage at my destiny, blow up all resistance to my transfiguration; let there be only my desire for light and darkness! let each one of my actions be either triumph or fall, flight or failure! let life grow and die in me with the speed of a lightning bolt! let not the pettiness and rationality of commonplace existence spoil the pleasures and torments of my inner chaos, the tragic delights of my final despair and joy!"*

- *"when men can no longer bear the monotony and the banality of ordinary existence, they will find in each experience of the absolute an opportunity to commit suicide. the impossibility of surviving such extraordinary states of exaltation will destroy existence. no one will then doubt that it is possible to long for death after having listened to certain symphonies or admired a unique landscape."*

- *"To speak of suffering as the path to love means to know nothing of suffering's satanic essence. you don't climb up the steps of suffering; you climb down. they do not lead to heaven but to hell. the darkness at the bottom of the ladder of suffering is less eternal or infinite than the blinding light at the top of the ladder of joy."*

- *"disjunction from the world through suffering leads to excessive interiorization and, paradoxically, to such a high level of consciousness that the world, with all its splendors and glooms, becomes exterior and transcendent."* (me- pantheistic paradox)

- *"...however painful my agony, however great my isolation, the distance separating me from the world does nothing but render it more accessible."*

- *"there's no salvation without the immediate. but man is a being who no longer knows the immediate."* (me- Jesus and anxiety about tomorrow, says think about today. Buddha talks about the present moment, etc)

- *"when we have persuaded ourselves that there is no truth. all salvation comes thenceforth, even salvation through nothing."*

- *"for those deprived of faith, an excess of subjectivity leads either to megalomania or self-denigration, to too much love or too much self-hatred. Either way, you spend yourself ahead of time. subjectivity makes you either god or satan."*

- *"man should stop being- or becoming - a rational animal. he should become a lunatic, risking everything for the sake of his dangerous fantasies, capable of exaltations, ready to die for all that the world has as well as for what it has not. each man's ideal should be to stop being a man. this can only be attained through absolute arbitrariness."*

- *"nothing matters. everything is possible, and yet nothing is. all is permitted, and yet again, nothing. no matter which way we go, it is no better than any other. it is all the same whether you achieve something*

or not, have faith or not, just as it is all the same whether you cry or remain silent. there is an explanation for everything, and yet there is none. everything is both real and unreal, normal and absurd, splendid and insipid. there is nothing worth more than anything else, nor any idea better than any other. why grow sad from one's sadness and delight in one's joy? What does it matter whether our tears come from pleasure or pain? love your unhappiness and hate your happiness, mix everything up, scramble it all! be a snowflake dancing in the air, a flower floating downstream! have courage when you don't need to, and be a coward when you must be brave! who knows? you may still be a winner! and if you lose, does it really matter? is there anything to win in this world? all gain is a loss, and all loss is a gain. why always expect a definite stance, clear ideas, meaningful words?"

- "all efforts to attain happiness, on the other hand, are entirely futile. *you can not retrace your steps once you've taken the path to unhappiness; it is the path of no return.* from being happy, one can become unhappy, so there are more unpleasant surprises in happiness than in unhappiness. the world seems right to us when we are happy; when unhappy, we wish the world were anything but what it is. though fully aware that the source of unhappiness is in us, we nevertheless turn a personal defect into a metaphysical deficiency."

- "why do men insist on achieving something? Would it not be better if they stood still under the sun in calm and silent immobility? what is there to accomplish? why so much effort and ambition? man has forgotten the meaning of silence."

- "could morality still serve such a being- *probably the most generous because also the most absurd, capable of renouncing the whole world, and consequently giving away all that can be given?* generosity is incompatible with morality, that rationalization of customs, that mechanization of life. *Any generous act is absurd, a renunciation unheard of in the ordinary man, who drapes himself in morality in order to hide his vulgar nullity.* all that is truly moral begins when we have done with morality. the pettiness of its laws is never more evident than in its condemnation of vice, the expression of carnal tragedy born from the presence of the spirit in the flesh. vice is the tragedy of the flesh, the flesh bursting out of its own fatality, attempting to break the shackles imprisoning its passionate impulses."

- "then you will think it useless to express an opinion, to take a stand, to make an impression; the noises you have renounced increase the anxiety of your soul. after having struggled madly to solve all problems, after having suffered on the heights of despair, in the supreme hour of revelation, you will find that the only answer, the only reality, is silence." (in 'nothing matters' he describes the Absurd Perspective that turns all and any action nonsensical. He also refers to being saved from acting like just another 'clown' through silence)

- "a little knowledge is delightful; a lot, disgusting. the more you know, the less you want to know. he who has not suffered from knowledge has never known anything."

- "fine psychological understanding is the product of a life of self-contemplation, a life which sees itself in other lives as if in so many mirrors; for a psychologist, all men are fragments of himself...quickly exhausting men and their limited resources, the psychologist is easily bored, for he is not naive enough to have friends and is too self-conscious to have lovers."

- "time...becomes an ever-growing nothingness, a dilating void, a threat from beyond."

(The Premonition of Madness- Cioran describes "ego-death" which is always said to be one of the most, if not the most, important parts of an experience of the Other, in exactly the same way as Eckhart, John of the

Cross, Augustine, Luther, etc., but then goes on to describe the Nihilistic experience, which is the religious experience, as “madness”. What kind of culture would allow a 22 year old to conceive of such a terrifying experience as this to be “madness” in a pejorative sense? Jesus said the path was narrow! The Nihilistic experience is madness, but it is also God.)

Drawn and Quartered

- *“History is the obstacle to ultimate revelation, the shackle we can strike off only if we have perceived the nullity of every event except the one that this very perception represents, and thanks to which we attain at moments to “the real truth,” i.e., to the victory over all truths.”*
- *“To escape our fate— what is the good of striving for that? Not that we must despair of finding a substitute ending. Yet it must be a likely one, one that has some chance of being realized. Man being what he is, can we admit that he might be granted the opportunity of subsiding in the peace of decay, amid the benefits of decrepitude?”* (me- Tillich: the meaning of life is to despair over the meaninglessness of life)
- *“The abyss is in ourselves and outside of ourselves, it is yesterday’s presentiment, today’s question, tomorrow’s certainty.”* (me- The Kingdom of God is Within You, turn inward, Vivekananda, renouncing, selflessness)
- *“Since in us has awakened the evil that slumbered in the remainder of the living, it remains for us to destroy ourselves so that they might be saved.”* (me- selflessness, self-abnegation)
- *“And the gods— have we not turned against them as well, outraged to see that they were conscious without suffering from the fact, while for us consciousness and shipwreck are one and the same thing?”* (me- rejecting the idea of a personal God. Another tenant of the Nihilistic Mystical experience.)
- *“At the climax of our Void, we will be doomed, then, to the indignity of a complete erosion, worse than a sudden catastrophe which would be honorable after all, even glamorous. Let us be confident, let us put our bets on catastrophe, more in accord with our genius and our tastes. Let us take one step further, let us suppose it to be upon us, let us treat it as a fait accompli. According to all appearances, it will include certain survivors, a few lucky ones who will have had the good fortune to contemplate its occurrence and to draw lessons from it. Their first concern will certainly be to abolish the memory of the old humanity, of all the enterprises that have discredited and destroyed it. Turning against the cities, they will seek to complete their ruin, to erase all traces of them. One rachitic tree will be worth more in their eyes than a museum or a temple. No more schools; on the other hand, courses in oblivion and unlearning to celebrate the virtues of inattention and the delights of amnesia. The disgust inspired by the sight of any book, frivolous or serious, will extend to all Knowledge, which will be referred to with embarrassment or dread as if it were an obscenity or a scourge. To bother with philosophy, to elaborate a system, to attach oneself to it and believe in it, will appear as an impiety, a provocation, and a betrayal, a criminal complicity with the past.”* (me- maybe stop writing 'me'? Vivekananda- 'good to be born in church, but not die in a church, 'lack of spiritual progression', Unity in different sects, perennialism, reject literalism)
- *“It is doubtless distressing that we must confront the final phase of the historical process at the moment when, having liquidated our old beliefs, we lack any metaphysical assets, any substantial reserves of the*

Absolute. Surprised by the death agony, dispossessed of everything, we skirt that flattering nightmare experienced by all who had the privilege of finding themselves at the heart of a conspicuous débâcle. If, with the courage to look things in the face, we had that of suspending our course, if only for an instant, this respite, this pause on a global scale, would suffice to reveal to us the nature of the precipice over which we hang, and the resulting dread would quickly be converted into prayers or lamentations, into a salutary convulsion."

- "What advantage would having faith be to me, since I understand Meister Eckhart just as well without it?"

- "Friendship being incompatible with truth, only the mute dialogue with our enemies is fruitful."

- "I would not want to live in a world drained of all religious feeling. I am not thinking of faith but of that inner vibration which, independent of any belief in particular, projects you into, and sometimes above God."

- "If the narrative of the Fall is so striking, it is because its author describes neither entities nor symbols: he sees a God strolling in a garden, a rural God, as one exegete has so accurately characterized Him."

- *"To detest someone is to want him to be anything but what he is. T. writes me that I am the man he loves most in the world . . . but he urges me at the same time to forgo my obsessions, to change my ways, to become different, to break with the man I am. Which is to say that he rejects my being."*

- "What a pity that "nothingness" has been devalued by an abuse of it made by philosophers unworthy of it!"

- "Whoever speaks the language of utopia is more alien to me than a reptile from another geological era."

- "A Tantric ritual: during the initiation ceremony, you are given a mirror in which you see your own image. Contemplating it, you realize you are nothing but that, i.e., nothing. To what end, so many pretenses, so many airs and graces, when it is so easy to comprehend one's insignificance?"

- "Plotinus experienced only four moments of ecstasy; Ramana Maharshi, but one. What does the number matter! If anyone is to be pitied, it is the man who has never had even an inkling of such things, and who speaks of them from hearsay."

- *"To be is to be cornered."*

- "In flawed families, a scion appears who dedicates himself to the truth and who ruins himself in its pursuit."

- *"Once one has understood, it would be best to drop dead on the spot. What is to understand? What we have really grasped cannot be expressed in any way at all, and cannot be transmitted to anyone else, not even to oneself, so that we die without knowing the exact nature of our own secret."*

- "One is and remains a slave as long as one is not cured of hoping."

- "When I see someone fighting for some cause or other, I try to know what is happening in his mind and what can be the source of his obvious lack of maturity. The rejection of resignation is perhaps a sign of "life," never in any case of perspicacity or simply of reflexion. The sane man never lowers himself to protest. He scarcely consents to indignation. *Taking human affairs seriously attests to some secret flaw."*

- "I do not struggle against the world, I struggle against a greater force, against my weariness of the world."

- "I have less and less discernment as to what is good and what evil. When I make no distinction whatever between the two, supposing I reach this point some day — what a step forward! Toward what?"
- "Get hold of yourself, be confident once more, don't forget that it is not given to just anyone to have idolized discouragement without succumbing to it." (Ha!)
- "The further one advances into age, the more one runs after honors. Perhaps, in fact, vanity is never more active than on the brink of the grave. One clings to trifles in order not to realize what they conceal, one deceives nothingness by something even more null and void."
- "To try curing someone of a "vice," of what is the deepest thing he has, is to attack his very being, and indeed this is how he himself understands it, since he will never forgive you for wanting him to destroy himself in your way and not in his."
- "The apparition of life? A temporary madness, a prank, a whim of the elements, a vagary of matter. The only ones entitled to grumble are the individual beings, pitiable victims of a passing fancy."
- "The only profound thinkers are the ones who do not suffer from a sense of the ridiculous."
- "In my childhood, a profound shock when I heard my father, back from the cemetery, tell how a young mother who had lost her baby daughter burst out laughing at the moment the coffin was lowered into the grave. Fit of madness? Yes and no. For when we attend a funeral and the absolute deception is suddenly unmasked, do we not have a craving to react precisely like that mother? It is too much — it is almost a provocation: nature exaggerates. We conceive that we might collapse in hilarity."
- "*We are all of us in error*, the humorists excepted. They alone have discerned, as though in jest, the inanity of all that is serious and even of all that is frivolous." (me- symbolism, finite/infinite distinction)
- "I abide by appearances, I note what they are and adhere to them only to the degree that, as a living being, I cannot do otherwise. I act like other people, I perform the same deeds they do, but I identify myself with neither my words nor my actions, I bow to customs and laws, I pretend to share the convictions, i.e., the prejudices, of my fellow citizens, while knowing that in the last analysis I am quite as unreal as they. What then is the skeptic? — A ghost: a conformist ghost."
- "*Life is more and less than boredom, though it is in boredom and by boredom that we discern what life is worth. Once boredom insinuates itself into you, once you fall under its invisible hegemony, everything else seems insignificant. The same might be said of suffering. Yes, indeed. But suffering is localized, whereas boredom evokes an evil without site or support, only that indefinable nothing that erodes you . . . A pure erosion, whose imperceptible effect slowly transforms you into a ruin unnoticed by others and almost unnoticed by yourself.*" (Tillich)
- "To die at sixty or at eighty is harder than at ten or at thirty. Habituation to life, there's the rub. For life is a vice — the greatest one of all. Which explains why we have so much difficulty ridding ourselves of it."
- "When I happen to be satisfied with everything, even with God and myself, I immediately react like the man who, on a brilliant day, torments himself because the sun is bound to explode in a few billion years."
- "Of two enemies at odds, it is unlikely that only one should be in the right. When we listen to them one after the other, we yield, if we are in good faith, to the arguments of each, at the risk of looking like a weathercock, of being, in short, too much of a philosopher."
- "What is evil? It is what is done with a view to happiness in this world."

- "Everything is nothing, including the consciousness of nothing."
 - "Everything that happens is at once natural and inconceivable. This conclusion is unavoidable, whether we consider great or trivial events."
 - *"Everything I have ventured, everything I have held forth on all my life is indissociable from what I have experienced. I have invented nothing, I have merely been the secretary of my sensations."*
 - *"We can conceive of eternity only by eliminating all the perishable, all that counts for us. Eternity is absence, being that fills none of the functions of being; it is privation erected into . . . something or other, hence it is nothing or, at most, an estimable fiction."* (amazing! God is Nothing!)
 - "Undeniable sign of spiritual nonfulfillment: every passionate reaction to blame, that twinge at the heart whenever we are reproached in one way or another. This is the cry of the old Adam in each of us, it proves we have not yet conquered our origins. So long as we do not aspire to be scorned, we are like the others, like those precisely whom we scorn."
 - "X, who instead of looking at things directly has spent his life juggling with concepts and abusing abstract terms, now that he must envisage his own death, is in desperate straits. Fortunately for him, he flings himself, as is his custom, into abstractions, into commonplaces illustrated by jargon. A glamorous hocus-pocus, such is philosophy. But ultimately, everything is hocus-pocus, except for this very assertion that participates in an order of propositions one dares not question because they emanate from an unverifiable certitude, one somehow anterior to the brain's career."
 - "It makes no sense to say that death is the goal of life. But what else is there to say?"
 - *"We regret not having had the courage to make such and such a decision; we regret much more having made one — any one. Better no action than the consequences of an action!"*
 - "All things considered, philosophy is not so contemptible: to hide oneself under more or less objective truths, to disclose oppressions that apparently do not concern us, to cultivate faceless dreads, to camouflage calls for help by the splendors of language . . . Philosophy? An anonymous cry..."
 - "Everyone is mistaken, everyone lives in illusion. At best, we can admit a scale of fictions, a hierarchy of unrealities, giving preference to one rather than to another; but to choose, no, definitely not that..."
(me- Vivekananda, Tillich, Symbolism, Becker)
 - "Boredom, which seems to search out everything to its root, actually searches out nothing, because it descends only into itself and sounds only its own void."
 - *"As soon as one returns to Doubt (if it could be said that one has ever left it), undertaking anything at all seems not so much useless as extravagant. No joyful companion, Doubt works deep within you like a disease or, even more effectively, like a faith."* (me- Tillich exactly, pg. 25 dynamics of faith)
 - "To that friend who tells me he is bored because he cannot work, I answer that boredom is a higher state, and that we debase it by relating it to the notion of work."
 - "Get hold of yourself, be confident once more, don't forget that it is not given to just anyone to have idolized discouragement without succumbing to it." (me- Vivekananda)
 - "After all, why should ordinary people want to contemplate the End, especially when we see the condition of those who do?" (Ha! Bad PR)
 - "Only the perception of the Void allows us to triumph over death. For if everything lacks reality, why should death be allowed it?"
 - "A terrible yet endurable mortification: to be born among a people that will never be mentioned."
-

The Trouble With Being Born

- "The further men get from God, the farther they advance into the knowledge of religions."
- "Existence = Torment. The equation seems obvious to me, but not to one of my friends. How to convince them? I cannot *lend* him my sensations; yet only they would have the power to persuade him, to give him that additional dose of *ill-being* he has so insistently asked for all this time."
- "The West: a sweet-smelling rottenness, a perfumed corpse."
- "...Do we think of Buddha withdrawing from the world *on account of his contemporaries?*"
- "Life would become endurable only among a humanity which no longer have any illusions in reserve, a humanity completely disabused and *delighted* to be so."
- "Life is nothing; death, everything. Yet there *is* nothing which is death, independent of life. It is precisely this absence of autonomous, distinct reality which makes death universal; it has no realm of its own, it is omnipresent, like everything which lacks identity, limit, and bearing; an indecent infinitude." (me- A Pessimist's description of God)
- "When someone complains that his life has come to nothing, we need merely remind him that life itself is an analogous situation, if not worse."
- "The perception of the Precarious raised to the level of vision, of mystical experience."
- "Explosive force of any mortification. Every vanquished desire affords us power. We have the more hold over this world the further we withdraw from it, the less we adhere to it. *Renunciation confers an infinite power.*"
- "'All is suffering' – modernized, the Buddhist expression runs: 'All is nightmare.'"

The Undelivered (within The New Gods)

- "The void allows us to erode the idea of being; but it is not drawn into this erosion itself; it survives an attack which would be self-destructive for any other idea." (me- God)
- "*And to understand signifies to discern the degree of awakening to which a being has achieved, in his capacity to perceive the sum of unreality which enters into each phenomenon.*" (me- can you imagine the thing you find most valuable in this world as worthless? Can you imagine your most cherished anything as meaningless?)
- "Beatitude is not compatible with this world. It is for beatitude that the hermit cuts all his moorings, for beatitude that he destroys himself." (me- Maya)
- "All our beliefs being intrinsically superficial and governing only appearances, it follows that all are on the same level, at the same degree of unreality." (me- limitations of language, the need for symbolism and myth, religious pluralism, anti-literalism, etc.)
- "Every day we should honor someone, creature or object, by renouncing them."
- "The void is nothingness stripped of its negative qualifications, nothingness transfigured. If we should manage to develop a taste for it, our relations with the world are transformed; something in us changes, though we keep our old defects. But we are no longer from *here* in the same way as before."
- "*How desist from what we shall never recover, from that pathetic and unheard of nothing which bears our name...we can vanquish it only by means of a sudden whirlwind which, sweeping away the ego, leaves us alone, without anyone, without ourselves...*" (me- awakening to the truth of selflessness, that all is one, unity through complete and utter renunciation and self-abnegation, psychedelics)

- "Thought, too, is a prejudice, a shackle. It liberates only at the beginning, when it permits us to break certain moorings; afterwards, all it is capable of is to adsorb our energy and to paralyze our impulses toward liberation."
- *"We cling to anything, if only we don't have to tear ourselves away from that fascination accountable for our actions and even our nature, from that primal dazzle which keeps us from discerning the nonreality in everything."*
- "The void- myself without me- is the liquidation of the adventure of the 'I'- it is being without any trace of being, a blessed engulfment, an incomparable disaster." (psychedelics, psilocybin)
- "All the same it seems inconceivable for us once we consider the self coldly; it crumbles, it vanishes, it is nothing more than the symbol of a fiction."
- "Even the Buddha after illumination was only Siddhartha Gautama *with knowledge in addition.*" (Mckenna 'no one knows what's going on here')
- *"To find that everything lacks reality and not to put an end to it all, this inconsistency is not an inconsistency at all: taken to extremes, the perception of the void coincides with the perception of the whole, with the entrance into the All."*
- *"Even if the experience of the void were only a deception, it would still deserve to be tried. What it proposes, what it attempts, is to reduce to nothing both life and death, and this with the sole intention of making them endurable to us."*

Dealing with the Mystics (within The Temptation to Exist)

- "It is a mistake to supposed that mysticism derives from a softening of the instincts, from a compromised vitality...To get a sense of them, imagine a Hernando Cortez in the middle of an invisible geography. The German mystics were conquerors too." (participation, this is hard work)

Tears and Saints

- *"All great conversions are born from the sudden revelation of life's meaninglessness. Nothing could be more impressive than this sudden apprehension of the void of existence."*
- *"The initial revelation of any monastery: everything is nothing. Thus begin all mysticisms. It is less than one step from nothing to God, for God is the positive expression of nothingness."*
- *"Without God, everything is nothingness. But God is the supreme nothingness!"*
- *"No matter how educated you are, if you don't think intensely about death, you are a mere fool. A great scholar – if he is nothing but that – is inferior to an illiterate peasant haunted by final questions. Generally speaking, science has dulled people's minds by diminishing their metaphysical consciousness."*
- *"If you believe in God, you are mad without having gone mad." (ha! It's not about 'belief', but experience, one must go 'mad' for God, e.g. Vivekananda's example of holding the head under water, become a 'God-intoxicated man, embracing the Nothingness, become the bible/don't just read the bible)*
- *"God's greatest advantage is that one can say or think anything about him. The less you connect your thoughts, abandoning them to contradictions, the more you risk coming near the truth. God benefits from the peripheries of logic." (symbolism, anti-literalism)*

- "He who does not think of God will forever remain a stranger to himself. God is self-knowledge, and universal history is a description of his various forms."
- "Since nothing has real substance, and life is a twirl in the void, its beginning and its end are meaningless." (Vivekananda, *Maya*)
- "Only by thinking about him constantly and mercilessly, only by setting siege to his solitude can we win rich spoils in our battle with him. If we lose heart and go halfway only, he will just be one more failure." (participation, Tillich, Tolstoy and the need for a change in one's life)
- "Theology is the negation of divinity. Looking for proofs of God is crazy idea...theology is the atheist's mode of believing. The most obscure mystical mumbo-jumbo is closer to God than the *Summa Theologiae*." (symbolism, infinite/finite gap, direct experience over mere belief, ritual, dogma, etc.)
- "I am sorry sometimes that God no longer fills us with dread. If only we could feel again the primordial quiver of dread in front of the unknown!" (psychedelics)
- "Religion is a smile masking cosmic nonsense, one last waft of perfume drifting over nothingness."
- "Bach's music is the medium of heavenly transfiguration."
- "Wine has brought men closer to God than theology."
- "When we have devoured the world and remain alone, God appears from behind the screen of Nothingness like a last temptation." (Vivekananda, when you are no longer satisfied with covering up the wound)
- "...we no longer know how to prepare ourselves for death. No one cultivates death *in* himself any longer, it happens *over* and *above* him." (Vivekananda, Tolstoy)
- "For an ancient philosopher or a medieval monk, 'there is no way out' would make a constant theme for meditation."
- "God's greatest advantage is that one can say or think anything about him. The less you connect your thoughts, abandoning them to contradictions, the more you risk coming near the truth. God benefits from the peripheries of logic." (symbolism)
- "...Bach often meditated on death...Handel compared to Bach, is of *this* world. Bach is *divine*..."
- "Saintry meditation is an imprisonment in original memory." (Plato, recollection)
- "Why do almost all madmen speak of God or believe themselves to be one? Having lost the actual contents of their memory, their mind has kept intact the original depths of memory."
- "The organ is an instrument which makes palpable God's distance from us." (ha!)
- "We are all subject to death at any moment." (Pascal)
- "There comes a moment in life when one places everything in relation to God. Anything less seems too little. Yet the fear that God may no longer be topical sometimes grabs you, and relating everything to him seems useless. The transience of the ultimate principle – a logically absurd idea, yet present in consciousness – fills you with strange terror. Could God be just a fashion of the soul, a fleeting passion of history?" (Vivekananda, Tolstoy, doubt as *part* of faith)
- "The more time has disappeared from one's memory, the closer one is to mysticism. Paradise is not possible without a defective memory. The healthier the memory is, the more it adheres to the world."
- "Compared to philosophers, saints know nothing. Yet they know everything. Compared to Aristotle, any saint is illiterate. What makes us then believe that we might learn more from the latter? Because all of the philosophers put together are not worth a single saint. Philosophy has no answers. Compared to

philosophy, saintliness is an exact science. It gives us precise answers to questions that philosophers do not even dare consider. Its method is suffering and its goal is God."

- *"In itself, philosophy, like the rest of culture, is nothing."*

- *"A philosopher is saved from mediocrity either through skepticism or mysticism, the two forms of despair in front of knowledge. Mysticism is an escape from knowledge, and skepticism is knowledge without hope. In either instance, the world is not a solution."*

- *"Saints are completely out-of-date." (ha!)*

- *"Without my solitude I would be nothing but another clown." (Quietism, non-movement, the absurdity of action, silence, renunciation, 9/13- how I am acting with Hattie with my outward actions and outbursts, blah)*

- *"When the void of time gives birth to eternity, one burns with religious courage. The emptying of time, whether out of boredom or dread, throws one into a vibrant nothingness, full of vague promises. No saint could find eternity in the world."*

- *"Saintliness is a negative sort of perfection...There are illnesses that can only be treated with a good dose of divinity, but I prefer the alleviation of pain provided by earthly tranquilizers." (Ha!)*

- *"God nestles in spiritual voids."*

- *"Saintliness cannot exist without the voluptuousness of pain and a perverse refinement of suffering."*

- *"Nothing can reveal divinity better than the inner multiplication, through memory, of a Bach fugue."*

- *"Mysticism revolves around the passion for ecstasy and a horror of the void. One cannot know one without the other...Once it has totally rejected the world, the soul is ripe for a long-term and fecund emptiness...One sees nothing except nothingness. And the latter has become everything. Ecstasy is plenitude in a void, a full void. It is an overwhelming frisson which convulses nothingness, an invasion of being in absolute emptiness." (incredible description of Nihilism)*

- *"The 'appetite for God'...is first a negation of existence...'appetite for God' can only be a symptom of nihilism. Its intensity proves to what extent one no longer belongs to this earth. One betrays a deficiency of vital instincts whenever one thinks instinctively about God."*

- *"All nihilists have wrestled with God. One more proof of his kinship with nothingness After you have trampled everything under foot, his is the last bastion of nothingness left."*

- *"Each time weariness with the world takes on a religious form, God appears like a sea of forgetfulness. Drowning in God is a refuge from our own individuality."*

- *"As long as you are busy with him you have an excuse for sadness and solitude. God? An official madness." (Ha! Too funny)*

- *"Listening to Bach, one sees God come into being. His music generates divinity. After a Bach...one feels that God must exist. Otherwise, Bach's music would be only heartrending illusion. Theologians and philosophers wasted so many days and nights searching for proofs of his existence, ignoring the only valid one: Bach." (agreed)*

- *"The more you think of God, the less you are. Thus God is nothing more than the projection of our longing for annihilation."*

- *"Healthy bodies and healthy minds have never been shaken by religious fears."*

- *"The failed mystic is the one who cannot cast off all temporal ties."*

- *"The last step towards nihilism is the disappearance into divinity."*

- *"Life is a series of obsessions that one must do away with."*

- *"Man is a paradox of nature, equally removed from it and from God...With it (consciousness), God appeared in his true light as one more nothingness."*
- *"Religion is a smile masking cosmic nonsense, one last waft of perfume drifting over nothingness."*
- *"To have faith one must remain passive vis-a-vis the world. The believer must not do anything."* (non-movement, Quietism, Vivekananda/Karma/Jnana Yoga7)
- *"Disagreement is a sign of spiritual vitality. It culminates in disagreement with God."* (Vivekananda, multiple sects, limits of language, symbolism)
- *"The obsession with God dislodges earthly love."*
- *"I have always wondered about people who are 'crazy for God,' who have sacrificed everything for him, first of all their minds."*
- *"Thinking is not exhaustive; there are infinite variations on the theme of God."*
- *"Intimations of God's supreme indifference render man's revolt utterly pointless. To be a hero only in the eyes of men is a paltry thing. There is no consolation in dying like a hero, i.e. misunderstood by the gods."*
- *"There are many thinkers and dreamers who never feel the need for God. Sadness without the need for consolation does not guarantee a religious experience. Those limited to sadness per se are strangers to God. The absolute is a specific tonality of sadness."* (this would make sense of the different levels of awareness, the different levels of the Nihilistic experience)
- *"...how do you fill out an empty life? With women, books, or worldly ambitions? No matter what you do, the starting point is boredom, and the end self-destruction."* (suicide)
- *"The task of a solitary man is to be even more solitary."*
- *"Any kind of boredom will reveal two things to us: our bodies and the nothingness of the world."*
- *"God...is he anything but the fateful moment when our life totters on the brink of destruction?"*
- *"Churches are undercover hospices."*
- *"An anxiety born out of nothing suddenly grows in us and confirms our homelessness."* (Tillich, Vivekananda)
- *"Only ecstasy cures us of pessimism. Life would be unbearable if it were real. As a dream, it is a mixture of charm and terror to which we gladly abandon ourselves. Consciousness is nature's nightmare."* (Vivekananda mixed with Zapffe)
- *"The company of mortals is, for a lucid man, pure torture."* (Ha!)
- *"I live on what makes other people die"* (quoting Michelangelo)
- *"To be alone, horribly alone, is the only imperative, and it must be obeyed at any price."*
- *"...life is an uninterrupted religious crisis, superficial for believers and shattering for doubters."*
- *"The ultimate goal of all religions: life as a diminution of the soul." (and on the other end) "All that if Life in me urges me to give up God." ('the divided self', Karma Yoga, Tolstoy, Augustine)*
- *"The fall – emblem of our human condition – is a nervous exacerbation of consciousness."*
- *"All that adheres to this world is trivial."*
- *"Let God pray for the man in whom there is nothing left to die!"* (uninterrupted religious crisis, infinite/finite gap that's unbridgeable)
- *"Voluntary hunger is a road to heaven; hunger from poverty, a crime of the earth."*
- *"Detachment is a negation of both life and death. Whoever has overcome his fear of death has also triumphed over life. For life is nothing but another word for this fear."*

- "When I realized there was no absolute except in renunciation, I dedicated myself to appearances." (bars, extreme lifestyle, maya, etc.)
- *"Nothing is more exquisite or more disturbing than to have the thought of God occur while one lies in the arms of a whore! It is easy to think of him after a page from the Bible or after an oratorio, but God's presence manifested in the midst of vulgar debauchery has an infinitely greater impact: it brings loneliness and the dread of nothingness back to mind with full force."* (Yes! Extreme lifestyle, always being aware even in situations that are supposedly distractions)
- "It may very well be that man's sole purpose is none other than to *think* of God...It is only by thinking of him that God makes one feel uncomfortable. Start prying into him and you are lost...God is an old frumpy coat which you must put on if you have nothing better to wear."
- "To doubt God is to be self-ironical."
- "Sometimes God is so easy to make out that just listening a bit more carefully to one's inner voice is enough."
- *"Spirit means renunciation...when people, not having experienced spiritual torture, satisfy their thirst for renunciation through a derivative: heroism."* (Ha! The worldly aspects of religion, atheism, etc. if there is no direct experience of everything being nothing, then you are left with delusions without the awareness that all are delusions, i.e. symbolism)
- *"Intimations of God's supreme indifference render man's revolt utterly pointless. To be a hero only in the eyes of men is a paltry thing. There is no consolation in dying like a hero, i.e., misunderstood by the gods."*
- "The more bored one is, the more self-conscious."
- *"...a sort of terminal emotion seizes us. We can talk for hours on end with people we despise, we can say happy and irrelevant things without their noticing how close we are to the Last Judgment, and how lost we are to the world!"* (my job/life)
- "Boredom is the only argument against immortality. From it derive all our negations."
- *"When nothing is left standing, one experiences exciting power thrills. The ironic mode is a ruse of self-importance: to make up for its nonexistence, the 'I' becomes everything."* (Ha! Desperation to the earthly)
- "Life is a reality only for wholesome people, high priests of stupidity!" (Ha!)
- *"We are not when we are one with the world. Our desire to escape the world and thus be ourselves sends us on a quest for suffering. Asceticism is the paroxysm of such desire, a systematic insomnia and starvation. Self-torture intensifies subjectivity...Once you have tasted the joys of suffering, you are hooked on them for ever."*
- *"There is so much knowledge in melancholy that we call it a vice."*
- "When you become prey to an incurable boredom, illness seems a welcome distraction."
- *"...detachment from worldly things, a precondition for attachment to God."*
- "Only ecstasy cures us of pessimism. Life would be unbearable if it were real. As a dream, it is a mixture of charm and terror to which we gladly abandon ourselves. Consciousness is nature's nightmare." (Ha! Vivekananda)
- "The course of meditation: you begin by ignoring the object and end by ignoring the world."
- "As long as I live I shall not allow myself to forget that I shall die..."

- "While reading subtle and useless philosophical polemics at the library, an irresistible longing for the desolation of deserts would sometimes grab hold of me."
- "I think of Man and see only shadows; I think of shadows and see only myself."
- "Man either loses himself in God or taunts him, but no one has ever remained level-headed in his presence."
- "*All that is Life in me urges me to give up God.*" (THE contradiction)
- "If you don't take an interest in him, you end up interested in mankind. Could you fall any lower than that?" (Ha!)
- "The dead center of existence: when it is all the same to you whether you read a newspaper article or think of God."
- "Despair and pride grow so closely together that even the keenest observer cannot tell them apart."
- "Truly, everything can be used as argument for or against him, because everything in the world both confirms and denies his divinity. Blasphemy and prayer are both justified."
- "The fall – emblem of our human condition – is a nervous exacerbation of consciousness."

"Paleontology" from within The New Gods

- "The flesh appears as an imposter, a fraud, a disguise which masks nothing. Was this all it was? And if it is worth no more, how does it manage to inspire me with repulsion or with terror?" (I ask myself this question all the time)
- Speaking about the "flesh": "those who made a great case for its insignificance: Buddha..."
- "The vision I have of it is the vision of a gravedigger infected with metaphysics. Doubtless I am wrong to keep thinking about it; one cannot *live* and lay much stress of it: a colossus would perish in the attempt." (mystics and saints are conquerors)
- "The horrible being the path of liberation...In the Middle Ages, a man made a regimen of salvation, he believed *energenically*: the corpse was in fashion."
- "Today, an edulcorated religion adheres only to "nice" hallucinations, to Evolution and to Progress."
- "In order to vanquish attachments...we should have to contemplate the ultimate nudity of a human being...wallow in the horror...in his physiology of an imminent corpse. *The vision would be a methodical, a controlled obsession, particularly salutary in ordeals. The skeleton excites us to serenity; the cadaver, to renunciation.*" (my father in a box)
- "...the monk...No one would gainsay the fact that he is in the process of disappearing." (Ha!)
- "Now more than ever, we should build monasteries...*for those who believe in everything and for those who believe in nothing. Where to escape? There no longer exists a single place where we can professionally execrate this world.*" (Everything and Nothing)
- "In order to conceive, and to steep ourselves in, unreality, we must have it constantly present to our minds. The day we feel it, see it, everything becomes unreal, except that unreality which alone makes existence tolerable."
- "We can discard an illusion, no matter how inveterate; but what to do when we are faced with the consistent, with the durable? If there is only what exists, if being spreads everywhere, how do we break away from it without falling to pieces? *The fear there is nothing is followed by the fear that there is something.* (Ha!)

- "Not that this world doesn't exist, but its reality is no such thing. Everything seems to exist and nothing exists." (Maya)
 - *"Every concerted pursuit, even that of nirvana, if we are not free to abandon it, is a shackle as much as any other."* (Renunciation at it's fullest, to abandon your own happiness, Nietzsche, Vivekananda, Tillich, Therese, Kempis, born in a church/die in a church)
 - *"To think without being any the wiser, or rather not to think at all but to remain there and to devour the silence – that is where perspicacity should lead. No pleasure is comparable to that of knowing we don't think. It will be objected, Isn't knowing we don't think still thinking? No doubt, but the wretchedness of thought is surmounted for the time that, instead of leaping from idea to idea, we remain deliberately within just one, one which rejects all the rest and which dissolves itself as soon as it takes for its content its own absence."* (meditation on God, even though the word 'God' makes me cringe)
 - *"We must act so that nothing is ours, beginning with desire, that generator of dread."*
 - *"The world which causes it is reduced to a transitory assemblage of unreal elements. In short, our fear is intense in proportion as we give credence to the self and to the world...Only our triumph over things is real, only our realization of unreality, which our acumen constructs every day, every hour. To be delivered is to rejoice in this unreality, to seek it out each moment."* (Maya, Vivekananda)
 - *"Why then, knowing that in the last resort everything is unreal, still be carried away for such trifles? I am carried away, granted, but I am not involved, which is to say that I take no real interest."* (Karma Yoga, Therese, Tolstoy)
 - *"Awakening is independent of intellectual capacities: a genius can be a dunce, spiritually speaking. Moreover, knowledge as such gets on no further. An illiterate can possess 'the eye of understanding' and thereby find himself above and beyond any scholar."* (Ramakrishna- Vivekananda's mentor)
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19. Pascal

Pensées

"We do not require great education of the mind to understand that here is no real and lasting satisfaction; that our pleasures are only vanity; that our evils are infinite; and, lastly, that death, which threatens us every moment, must infallibly place us within a few years under the dreadful necessity of being for ever either annihilated or unhappy. There is nothing more real than this, nothing more terrible. Be we as heroic as we like, that is the end which awaits the noblest life in the world. Let us reflect on this, and then say whether it is not beyond doubt that there is no good in this life but in the hope of another; that we are happy only in proportion as we draw near it; and that, as there are no more woes for those who have complete assurance of eternity, so there is no more happiness for those who have no insight into it. Surely then it is a great evil thus to be in doubt, but it is at least an indispensable duty to seek when we are in such doubt; and thus the doubter who does not seek is altogether completely unhappy and completely wrong. And if besides this he is easy and content, professes to be so, and indeed boasts of it; if it is this state itself which is the subject of his joy and vanity, I have no words to describe so silly a creature. How can people hold these opinions? What joy can we find in the expectation of nothing but

hopeless misery? What reason for boasting that we are in impenetrable darkness? And how can it happen that the following argument occurs to a reasonable man? "I know not who put me into the world, nor what the world is, nor what I myself am. I am in terrible ignorance of everything. I know not what my body is, nor my senses, nor my soul, not even that part of me which thinks what I say, which reflects on all and on itself, and knows itself no more than the rest. I see those frightful spaces of the universe which surround me, and I find myself tied to one corner of this vast expanse, without knowing why I am put in this place rather than in another, nor why the short time which is given me to live is assigned to me at this point rather than at another of the whole eternity which was before me or which shall come after me. I see nothing but infinites on all sides, which surround me as an atom, and as a shadow which endures only for an instant and returns no more. All I know is that I must soon die, but what I know least is this very death which I cannot escape...Such is my state, full of weakness and uncertainty. And from all this I conclude that I ought to spend all the days of my life without caring to inquire into what must happen to me. Perhaps I might find some solution to my doubts, but I will not take the trouble, nor take a step to seek it; and after treating with scorn those who are concerned with this care, I will go without foresight and without fear to try the great event, and let myself be led carelessly to death, uncertain of the eternity of my future state." Who would desire to have for a friend a man who talks in this fashion? Who would choose him out from others to tell him of his affairs? Who would have recourse to him in affliction? And indeed to what use in life could one put him?" (Vivekananda, Tolstoy, Kempis, Huxley, Buddha- most people aren't philosophers and don't ask 'why' about anything about existence)

- "The vanity of the sciences.—Physical science will not console me for the ignorance of morality in the time of affliction." (the wiki page is huge on his scientific ideas, as if they were primary)

- "Returning to himself, let man consider what he is in comparison with all existence; let him regard himself as lost in this remote corner of nature; and from the little cell in which he finds himself lodged, I mean the universe, let him estimate at their true value the earth, kingdoms, cities, and himself. What is a man in the Infinite?"

- "Let him see therein an infinity of universes, each of which has its firmament, its planets, its earth, in the same proportion as in the visible world; in each earth animals, and in the last mites, in which he will find again all that the first had, finding still in these others the same thing without end and without cessation. Let him lose himself in wonders as amazing in their littleness as the others in their vastness. For who will not be astounded at the fact that our body, which a little while ago was imperceptible in the universe, itself imperceptible in the bosom of the whole, is now a colossus, a world, or rather a whole, in respect of the nothingness which we cannot reach? He who regards himself in this light will be afraid of himself, and observing himself sustained in the body given him by nature between those two abysses of the Infinite and Nothing, will tremble at the sight of these marvels; and I think that, as his curiosity changes into admiration, he will be more disposed to contemplate them in silence than to examine them with presumption. For in fact what is man in nature? A Nothing in comparison with the Infinite, an All in comparison with the Nothing, a mean between nothing and everything. Since he is infinitely removed from comprehending the extremes, the end of things and their beginning are hopelessly hidden from him in an impenetrable secret, he is equally incapable of seeing the Nothing from which he was made, and the Infinite in which he is swallowed up."

- "Through failure to contemplate these Infinites, men have rashly rushed into the examination of nature, as though they bore some proportion to her." (science)

- "Let us then take our compass; we are something, and we are not everything. The nature of our existence hides from us the knowledge of first beginnings which are born of the Nothing; and the littleness of our being conceals from us the sight of the Infinite."

- *"This is our true state; this is what makes us incapable of certain knowledge and of absolute ignorance. We sail within a vast sphere, ever drifting in uncertainty, driven from end to end. When we think to attach ourselves to any point and to fasten to it, it wavers and leaves us; and if we follow it, it eludes our grasp, slips past us, and vanishes for ever. Nothing stays for us. This is our natural condition, and yet most contrary to our inclination; we burn with desire to find solid ground and an ultimate sure foundation whereon to build a tower reaching to the Infinite. But our whole groundwork cracks, and the earth opens to abysses."* (Vivekananda)

- "...is not the duration of our life equally removed from eternity, even if it lasts ten years longer?" (Ha!)

- *"If magistrates had true justice, and if physicians had the true art of healing, they would have no occasion for square caps; the majesty of these sciences would of itself be venerable enough. But having only imaginary knowledge, they must employ those silly tools that strike the imagination with which they have to deal; and thereby in fact they inspire respect. Soldiers alone are not disguised in this manner, because indeed their part is the most essential; they establish themselves by force, the others by show. Therefore our kings seek out no disguises. They do not mask themselves in extraordinary costumes to appear such; but they are accompanied by guards and halberdiers. Those armed and red-faced puppets who have hands and power for them alone, those trumpets and drums which go before them, and those legions round about them, make the stoutest tremble. They have not dress only, they have might. A very refined reason is required to regard as an ordinary man the Grand Turk, in his superb seraglio, surrounded by forty thousand janissaries. We cannot even see an advocate in his robe and with his cap on his head, without a favourable opinion of his ability."*

- *"The consciousness of the falsity of present pleasures, and the ignorance of the vanity of absent pleasures, cause inconstancy."*

- *"Nothing is so insufferable to man as to be completely at rest, without passions, without business, without diversion, without study. He then feels his nothingness, his forlornness, his insufficiency, his dependence, his weakness, his emptiness. There will immediately arise from the depth of his heart weariness, gloom, sadness, fretfulness, vexation, despair."* (superficially- distractions/everyday life. Ultimately- how does complete renunciation bring forth the 'joys' that the saints speak of? I am with Pascal here, that the Nothingness is observed through non-movement, a turning inward, etc.; and this is *not* a 'superficially' pleasant experience)

- *"...I have discovered that all the unhappiness of men arises from one single fact, that they cannot stay quietly in their own chamber. A man who has enough to live on, if he knew how to stay with pleasure at home, would not leave it to go to sea or to besiege a town."*

- *"Whatever condition we picture to ourselves, if we muster all the good things which it is possible to possess, royalty is the finest position in the world. Yet, when we imagine a king attended with every pleasure he can feel, if he be without diversion, and be left to consider and reflect on what he is, this feeble happiness will not sustain him; he will necessarily fall into forebodings of dangers, of revolutions which may happen, and, finally, of death and inevitable disease; so that if he be without what is called diversion, he is unhappy, and more unhappy than the least of his subjects who plays and diverts himself. Hence it comes that play and the society of women, war, and high posts, are so sought after. Not that*

there is in fact any happiness in them, or that men imagine true bliss to consist in money won at play, or in the hare which they hunt; we would not take these as a gift. We do not seek that easy and peaceful lot which permits us to think of our unhappy condition, nor the dangers of war, nor the labour of office, but the bustle which averts these thoughts of ours, and amuses us...*As men who naturally understand their own condition avoid nothing so much as rest, so there is nothing they leave undone in seeking turmoil. Not that they have an instinctive knowledge of true happiness ... So we are wrong in blaming them. Their error does not lie in seeking excitement, if they seek it only as a diversion; the evil is that they seek it as if the possession of the objects of their quest would make them really happy. In this respect it is right to call their quest a vain one.*" (amazing)

- *"They have a secret instinct which impels them to seek amusement and occupation abroad, and which arises from the sense of their constant unhappiness. They have another secret instinct, a remnant of the greatness of our original nature, which teaches them that happiness in reality consists only in rest, and not in stir. And of these two contrary instincts they form within themselves a confused idea, which hides itself from their view in the depths of their soul, inciting them to aim at rest through excitement, and always to fancy that the satisfaction which they have not will come to them, if, by surmounting whatever difficulties confront them, they can thereby open the door to rest."* (I just said I wanted to embrace the life of a Monk, on the one hand, of solitude and non-movement, while also living on the other extreme of going out and living a destructive lifestyle, 5/3/17)

- *"Whence comes it that this man, who lost his only son a few months ago, or who this morning was in such trouble through being distressed by lawsuits and quarrels, now no longer thinks of them? Do not wonder; he is quite taken up in looking out for the boar which his dogs have been hunting so hotly for the last six hours. He requires nothing more. However full of sadness a man may be, he is happy for the time, if you can prevail upon him to enter into some amusement; and however happy a man may be, he will soon be discontented and wretched, if he be not diverted and occupied by some passion or pursuit which prevents weariness from overcoming him. Without amusement there is no joy; with amusement there is no sadness. And this also constitutes the happiness of persons in high position, that they have a number of people to amuse them, and have the power to keep themselves in this state."*

- *"Diversion.—Men are entrusted from infancy with the care of their honour, their property, their friends, and even with the property and the honour of their friends. They are overwhelmed with business, with the study of languages, and with physical exercise; [71] and they are made to understand that they cannot be happy unless their health, their honour, their fortune and that of their friends be in good condition, and that a single thing wanting will make them unhappy. Thus they are given cares and business which make them bustle about from break of day.—It is, you will exclaim, a strange way to make them happy! What more could be done to make them miserable?—Indeed! what could be done? We should only have to relieve them from all these cares; for then they would see themselves: they would reflect on what they are, whence they came, whither they go, and thus we cannot employ and divert them too much. And this is why, after having given them so much business, we advise them, if they have some time for relaxation, to employ it in amusement, in play, and to be always fully occupied. How hollow and full of ribaldry is the heart of man!"*

- *"I spent a long time in the study of the abstract sciences, and was disheartened by the small number of fellow-students in them."* (alienation, Audi delivering a lecture in the most complex language, on the 'big' topic of the 'problem of evil' to a room full of 5, four if you don't count the old man sleeping in the front)

- "One thought alone occupies us; we cannot think of two things at the same time. This is lucky for us according to the world, not according to God."
- *"We do not content ourselves with the life we have in ourselves and in our own being; we desire to live an imaginary life in the mind of others, and for this purpose we endeavour to shine. We labour unceasingly to adorn and preserve this imaginary existence, and neglect the real. And if we possess calmness, or generosity, or truthfulness, we are eager to make it known, so as to attach these virtues to that imaginary existence. We would rather separate them from ourselves to join them to it; and we would willingly be cowards in order to acquire the reputation of being brave. A great proof of the nothingness of our being, not to be satisfied with the one without the other, and to renounce the one for the other! For he would be infamous who would not die to preserve his honour."* (the opposite of Karma Yoga)
- "We are so presumptuous that we would wish to be known by all the world, even by people who shall come after, when we shall be no more; and we are so vain that the esteem of five or six neighbours delights and contents us."
- *"We do not trouble ourselves about being esteemed in the towns through which we pass. But if we are to remain a little while there, we are so concerned. How long is necessary? A time commensurate with our vain and paltry life."*
- *"Vanity.—How wonderful it is that a thing so evident as the vanity of the world is so little known, that it is a strange and surprising thing to say that it is foolish to seek greatness!"* (Vivekananda speaks of the rarity of the Nihilistic belief, Kierkegaard, Cioran, Otto (recently read), all state about the rare instances of this 'true' religious experience)
- *"He who does not see the vanity of the world is himself very vain. Indeed who do not see it but youths who are absorbed in fame, diversion, and the thought of the future? But take away diversion, and you will see them dried up with weariness. They feel then their nothingness without knowing it; for it is indeed to be unhappy to be in insufferable sadness as soon as we are reduced to thinking of self, and have no diversion."*
- *"If our condition were truly happy, we would not need diversion from thinking of it in order to make ourselves happy."*
- *"Diversion.—As men are not able to fight against death, misery, ignorance, they have taken it into their heads, in order to be happy, not to think of them at all."*
- *"Misery.—The only thing which consoles us for our miseries is diversion, and yet this is the greatest of our miseries. For it is this which principally hinders us from reflecting upon ourselves, and which makes us insensibly ruin ourselves. Without this we should be in a state of weariness, and this weariness would spur us to seek a more solid means of escaping from it. But diversion amuses us, and leads us unconsciously to death."* (Kierkegaard, Maya)
- *"We know ourselves so little, that many think they are about to die when they are well, and many think they are well when they are near death, unconscious of approaching fever, or of the abscess ready to form itself."* (Maya)
- "For the Christian faith goes mainly to establish these two facts, the corruption of nature, and redemption by Jesus Christ." ('Christ' in a symbolic, non-literal sense)
- "Nothing is so important to man as his own state, nothing is so formidable to him as eternity; and thus it is not natural that there should be men indifferent to the loss of their existence, and to the perils of

everlasting suffering. They are quite different with regard to all other things. They are afraid of mere trifles; they foresee them; they feel them. And this same man who spends so many days and nights in rage and despair for the loss of office, or for some imaginary insult to his honour, is the very one who knows without anxiety and without emotion that he will lose all by death. It is a monstrous thing to see in the same heart and at the same time this sensibility to trifles and this strange insensibility to the greatest objects. It is an incomprehensible enchantment, and a supernatural slumber, which indicates as its cause an all-powerful force. There must be a strange confusion in the nature of man, that he should boast of being in that state in which it seems incredible that a single individual should be. However, experience has shown me so great a number of such persons that the fact would be surprising."

- "If, at the bottom of their heart, they are troubled at not having more light, let them not disguise the fact; this avowal will not be shameful. The only shame is to have none. *Nothing reveals more an extreme weakness of mind than not to know the misery of a godless man.*" (the Nihilistic experience of 'Atheism' is something that goes almost utterly unexpressed by the new atheists and our current culture)

- "I find it necessary to point out the sinfulness of those men who live in indifference to the search for truth in a matter which is so important to them...For it is not to be doubted that the duration of this life is but a moment; that the state of death is eternal, whatever may be its nature; and that thus all our actions and thoughts must take such different directions according to the state of that eternity, that it is impossible to take one step with sense and judgment, unless we regulate our course by the truth of that point which ought to be our ultimate end."

- "They have them before their eyes; they refuse to look at them; and in that ignorance they choose all that is necessary to fall into this misfortune if it exists, to await death to make trial of it, yet to be very content in this state, to make profession of it, and indeed to boast of it. Can we think seriously on the importance of this subject without being horrified at conduct so extravagant? This resting in ignorance is a monstrous thing..."

- "*The sensibility of man to trifles, and his insensibility to great things, indicates a strange inversion. Let us imagine a number of men in chains, and all condemned to death, where some are killed each day in the sight of the others, and those who remain see their own fate in that of their fellows, and wait their turn, looking at each other sorrowfully and without hope. It is an image of the condition of men.*"

- "When I consider the short duration of my life, swallowed up in the eternity before and after, the little space which I fill, and even can see, engulfed in the infinite immensity of spaces of which I am ignorant, and which know me not, I am frightened, and am astonished at being here rather than there; for there is no reason why here rather than there, why now rather than then. Who has put me here? By whose order and direction have this place and time been allotted to me? The eternal silence of these infinite spaces frightens me."

- "It is a horrible thing to feel all that we possess slipping away."

- "*Sudden death alone is feared...*"

- "It is certain that the mortality or immortality of the soul must make an entire difference to morality. And yet philosophers have constructed their ethics independently of this: they discuss to pass an hour. Plato, to incline to Christianity."

- "This is what I see and what troubles me. I look on all sides, and I see only darkness everywhere. Nature presents to me nothing which is not matter of doubt and concern. If I saw nothing there which

revealed a Divinity, I would come to a negative conclusion; if I saw everywhere the signs of a Creator, I would remain peacefully in faith. But, seeing too much to deny and too little to be sure, I am in a state to be pitied; wherefore I have a hundred time wished that if a God maintains nature, she should testify to Him unequivocally, and that, if the signs she gives are deceptive, she should suppress them altogether; that she should say everything or nothing, that I might see which cause I ought to follow. Whereas in my present state, ignorant of what I am or of what I ought to do, I know neither my condition nor my duty."

- "It is incomprehensible that God should exist, and it is incomprehensible that He should not exist; that the soul should be joined to the body, and that we should have no soul; that the world should be created, and that it should not be created, etc.; that original sin should be, and that it should not be."

- *"The finite is annihilated in the presence of the infinite, and becomes a pure nothing. So our spirit before God, so our justice before divine justice."* (Beyond Good and Evil, finite/infinite gap)

- "And thus, when one is forced to play, he must renounce reason to preserve his life, rather than risk it for infinite gain, as likely to happen as the loss of nothingness."

- *"If there is a God, He is infinitely incomprehensible, since, having neither parts nor limits, He has no affinity to us. We are then incapable of knowing either what He is or if He is...God is, or He is not."* But to which side shall we incline? Reason can decide nothing here. There is an infinite chaos which separated us. A game is being played at the extremity of this infinite distance where heads or tails will turn up. What will you wager? According to reason, you can do neither the one thing nor the other; according to reason, you can defend neither of the propositions." (no coincidence that Pascal agrees with Otto's description of the 'numinous' as 'terrifying' and 'incomprehensible', these are two aspects of the Nihilistic experience)

- *"In writing down my thought, it sometimes escapes me; but this makes me remember my weakness, that I constantly forget. This is as instructive to me as my forgotten thought; for I strive only to know my nothingness. Scepticism.—I shall here write my thoughts without order, and not perhaps in unintentional confusion; that is true order, which will always indicate my object by its very disorder. I should do too much honour to my subject, if I treated it with order, since I want to show that it is incapable of it."* (how I should 'structure' my writings/thoughts; no structure, how do you 'box in' Nothingness? You, obviously, can't, Cioran has said this exact thing)

- *"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."*

- "...man is quite capable of the most extravagant opinions, since he is capable of believing that he is not in a state of natural and inevitable weakness, but, on the contrary, of natural wisdom." (Maya)

- *"[I have passed a great part of my life believing that there was justice, and in this I was not mistaken; for there is justice according as God has willed to reveal it to us. But I did not take it so, and this is where I made a mistake; for I believed that our justice was essentially just, and that I had that whereby to know and judge of it. But I have so often found my right judgment at fault, that at last I have come to distrust myself, and then others. I have seen changes in all nations and men, and thus after many changes of judgment regarding true justice, I have recognised that our nature was but in continual change, and I have not changed since; and if I changed, I would confirm my opinion."*

- *"Ecclesiastes shows that man without God is in total ignorance and inevitable misery."*

- *"Scepticism helps religion."* (Tillich- doubt as faith, Kierkegaard- faith as the opposite of despair not virtue, Vivekananda- believe nothing, disbelieve everything)
- *"All the principles of sceptics, stoics, atheists, etc., are true. But their conclusions are false, because the opposite principles are also true."* (this goes with Pascal's mistrust of 'contradictions' being a solid criterion for 'truth')
- *"The greatness of man is great in that he knows himself to be miserable. A tree does not know itself to be miserable. It is then being miserable to know oneself to be miserable; but it is also being great to know that one is miserable."*
- *"We are not miserable without feeling it. A ruined house is not miserable. Man only is miserable."* (experience is needed)
- *"And those who most despise men, and put them on a level with the brutes, yet wish to be admired and believed by men, and contradict themselves by their own feelings; their nature, which is stronger than all, convincing them of the greatness of man more forcibly than reason convinces them of their baseness."* (Ha! the strongest contradiction?)
- *"Man either hides his miseries, or, if he disclose them, glories in knowing them."*
- *"Notwithstanding the sight of all our miseries, which press upon us and take us by the throat, we have an instinct which we cannot repress, and which lifts us up."*
- *"Men are so necessarily mad, that not to be mad would amount to another form of madness."* (Becker, Tillich, Cioran)
- *"It is dangerous to make man see too clearly his equality with the brutes without showing him his greatness. It is also dangerous to make him see his greatness too clearly, apart from his vileness. It is still more dangerous to leave him in ignorance of both. But it is very advantageous to show him both. Man must not think that he is on a level either with the brutes or with the angels, nor must he be ignorant of both sides of his nature; but he must know both."*
- *"I blame equally those who choose to praise man, those who choose to blame him, and those who choose to amuse themselves; and I can only approve of those who seek with lamentation."*
- *"It is good to be tired and wearied by the vain search after the true good, that we may stretch out our arms to the Redeemer."*
- *"All these contradictions, which seem most to keep me from the knowledge of religion, have led me most quickly to the true one."*
- *"Experience makes us see an enormous difference between piety and goodness."*
- *"The property of justice is to humble pride, however holy may be our work...and the property of mercy is to combat sloth by exhorting to good works..."* (non-movement)
- *"There is nothing so perilous as what pleases God and man."* (Earthly/Other)
- *"It is better not to fast, and thereby humbled, than to fast and be self-satisfied therewith."* (Vivekananda, Francis de Sales)
- *"The knowledge of God without that of man's misery causes pride. The knowledge of man's misery without that of God causes despair."* (great! Huxley says that the simple formulation of pursuing God without losing the self, instead of losing the self to God is the cause of all religious atrocities)
- *"Christianity is strange. It bids man recognize that he is vile, even abominable, and bids himolitude desire to be like God. Without such a counterpoise, this dignity would make him horribly vain, or this*

humiliation would make him terribly abject.” (Becker- how does one actually balance this 'divided-self, double-mindedness?)

- **“Atheism shows strength of mind, but only to a certain degree.”** (atheism realizes the emptiness of religious symbols during a particular time, but if this atheism ends in Naturalism, then it is not going far enough. The reasonable conclusion is Nihilism, the terror of it)
