***The Religious Experience of Nihilism***

“And indeed the Christian is, in a certain sense--in an ultimate sense--a "Nihilist"; for to him, in the end, the world is nothing, and God is all. This is, of course, the precise opposite of the Nihilism we have examined here, where God is nothing and the world is all; that is a Nihilism that proceeds from the Abyss, and the Christian's is a "Nihilism" that proceeds from abundance. The true Nihilist places his faith in things that pass away and end in nothing; all "optimism" on this foundation is clearly futile.”

“Nihilism is, most profoundly, a spiritual disorder, and it can be overcome only by spiritual means; and there has been no attempt whatever in the contemporary world to apply such means.”

“This "anxiety" and this "abyss" are precisely the nothingness out of which God has called each man into being, and back to which man seems to fall when he denies God, and in consequence, denies his own creation and his own being.”

“If death is, as the Liberal and Nihilist both believe, the extinction of the individual, then this world and everything in it-love, goodness, sanctity, everything-are as nothing, nothing man may do is of any ultimate consequence and the full horror of life is hidden from man only by the strength of their will to deceive themselves; and "all things are lawful," no otherworldly hope or fear restrains men from monstrous experiments and suicidal dreams.”

Fr. Seraphim Eugene Rose

“Anxiety is freedom’s possibility; this anxiety alone is, through faith, absolutely formative, since it consumes all finite ends, discovers all their deceptions.”

“And for the whole of Christianity it is one of the most decisive definitions that the opposite of sin is not virtue but faith.”

Soren Kierkegaard

“Suddenly every vain hope became worthless to me.”

“At this grief my heart was utterly darkened; and whatever I beheld was death.”

St. Augustine

“Under certain circumstances, the appearance of the extremest form of Pessimism and actual Nihilism might be the sign of a process of incisive and most essential growth, and of mankind's transit into completely new conditions of existence. This is what I have understood.”

“...because nihilism represents the ultimate logical conclusion of our great values and ideals— because we must experience nihilism before we can find out what value these "values" really had.”

Friedrich Nietzsche

“"Oh worldly men! how fatally deluded! beholding everywhere the body brought to dust, yet everywhere the more carelessly living; the heart is neither lifeless wood nor stone, and yet it thinks not 'all is vanishing!'" Then turning, he directed his chariot to go back, and no longer waste his time in wandering. How could he, whilst in fear of instant death, go wandering here and there with lightened heart!”

Buddha

““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.”

“The finite is annihilated in the presence of the infinite,and becomes a pure nothing.”

Blaise Pascal

“The doctrine of Christ which He came into the world to teach, is contempt of all things, that we may thereby have power to receive the reward of the Spirit of God. The earth ‘void and nothing,’ signifies that the earth and all it contains are nothing, and the heavens without light, that all the lights of heaven, in comparison with God, are perfect darkness. Thus all created things, with the affections bestowed upon them, are nothing, because they are a hindrance, and the privation of our transformation in God...”

St. John of the Cross

“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!”

Emile Cioran

“Certain facts of which too keen a perception would act detrimentally to the life-force are, for most men, impossible of realization: i.e. , the uncertainty of life, the decay of the body, the vanity of all things under the sun. When we are in good health, we all feel very real, solid, and permanent; and this is of all our illusions the most ridiculous, and also the most obviously useful from the point of view of the efficiency and preservation of the race.”

“But the true intellectualist, who concedes nothing to instinct or emotion, is obliged in the end to adopt some form of sceptical philosophy. The horrors of nihilism, in fact, can only be escaped by the exercise of faith, by a trust in man’s innate but strictly irrational instinct for that Real “above all reason, beyond all thought” towards which at its best moments his spirit tends.”

Evelyn Underhill

“There are many foolish and unstable men who say, "See what a prosperous life that man hath, how rich and how great he is, how powerful, how exalted." But lift up thine eyes to the good things of heaven, and thou shalt see that all these worldly things are nothing, they are utterly uncertain, yea, they are wearisome, because they are never possessed without care and fear. The happiness of man lieth not in the abundance of temporal things but a moderate portion sufficeth him. Our life upon the earth is verily wretchedness.”

“He is truly great who deemeth himself small, and counteth all height of honour as nothing. He is the truly wise man, who counteth all earthly things as dung...”

“Oh, he who hath but a spark of true charity, hath verily learned that all worldly things are full of vanity.”

“What canst thou see anywhere which can continue long under the sun? Thou believest perchance that thou shalt be satisfied, but thou wilt never be able to attain unto this. If thou shouldest see all things before thee at once, what would it be but a vain vision?”

“Ah, foolish one! why thinkest thou that thou shalt live long, when thou art not sure of a single day? How many have been deceived, and suddenly have been snatched away from the body! How many times hast thou heard how one was slain by the sword, another was drowned, another falling from on high broke his neck, another died at the table, another whilst at play! One died by fire, another by the sword, another by the pestilence, another by the robber. Thus cometh death to all, and the life of men swiftly passeth away like a shadow. 8. Who will remember thee after thy death? And who will entreat for thee? Work, work now, oh dearly beloved, work all that thou canst. For thou knowest not when thou shalt die, nor what shall happen unto thee after death. While thou hast time, lay up for thyself undying riches. Think of nought but of thy salvation; care only for the things of God.”

Thomas a Kempis

“The customs and myths of traditional society provided a whole interpretation of the meaning of life, ready-made for the individual; all he had to do was to accept living it as true. The modern neurotic must do just this if he is to be “cured”: he must welcome a living illusion.”

“Again, we are talking about the highest ideal things, which always seem most unreal—but how can we settle for less? We need the boldest creative myths, not only to urge men on but also and

perhaps especially to help men see the reality of their condition. We have to be as hard-headed as possible about reality and possibility.”

“I think that taking life seriously means something such as this: that whatever man does on

this planet has to be done in the lived truth of the terror of creation, of the grotesque, of the rumble of panic underneath everything. Otherwise it is false.”

“It is no wonder that when therapies strip man down to his naked aloneness, to the real nature of experience and the problem of life, they slip into some kind of metaphysic of power and justification

from beyond. How can the person be left there trembling and alone? Offer him the possibility of mystical contact with the void of creation, the power of “It,” his likeness to God, or at the very

least the support of a guru who will vouch for these things in his own overpowering and harmonious-appearing person. Man must reach out for support to a dream, a metaphysic of hope that sustains him and makes his life worthwhile.”

“Finally, with these questions we saw that we could call into doubt the pretensions of the whole therapeutic enterprise. What joy and comfort can it give to fully awakened people? Once you

accept the truly desperate situation that man is in, you come to see not only that neurosis is normal, but that even psychotic failure represents only a little additional push in the routine stumbling

along life’s way. If repression makes an untenable life liveable, self-knowledge can entirely destroy it for some people.”

Ernest Becker

“The question then is this: Is there a courage which can conquer the anxiety of meaninglessness and doubt?”

“The answer must accept, as its precondition, the state of meaninglessness. It is not an answer if it demands the removal of this state; for that is just what cannot be done. He who is in the grip of doubt and meaninglessness cannot liberate himself from this grip but he asks for an answer which is valid within and not outside the situation of despair. He asks for the ultimate foundation of what we have called the 'courage of despair.' There is only one possible answer, if one does not try to escape the question; namely that the acceptance of despair is in itself faith. In this situation the meaning of life is reduced to despair about the meaning of life.”

“The experience of meaninglessness is more radical than mysticism. Therefore it transcends the mystical experience.”

Paul Tillich

“In one form or another, we are all in it. It is a most difficult and intricate state of things to understand. It has been preached in every country, taught everywhere, but only believed in by a few, because until we get the experiences ourselves we cannot believe in it. What does it show? Something very terrible. For it is all futile. Time, the avenger of everything, comes, and nothing is left. He swallows up the saint and the sinner, the king and the peasant, the beautiful and the ugly; he leaves nothing. Everything is rushing towards that one goal, destruction. Our knowledge, our arts, our sciences, everything is rushing towards it. None can stem the tide, none can hold it back for a minute. We may try to forget it, in the same way that persons in a plague-stricken city try to create oblivion by drinking, dancing, and other vain attempts, and so becoming paralysed. So we are trying to forget, trying to create oblivion by all sorts of sense-pleasures. And this is Maya.”

“Millions like you and me think that we are great people in the world; but we all die, and in five minutes the world forgets us.”

“Where God is, there is no other. Where the world is, there is no God. These two will never unite. [Like] light and darkness. That is what I have understood from Christianity and the life of the Teacher. Is not that Buddhism? Is not that Hinduism? Is not that Mohammedanism? Is not that the teaching of all the great sages and teachers? What is the world that is to be given up? It is here. I am carrying it all with me. My own body. It is all for this body that I put my hand voluntarily upon my fellow man, just to keep it nice and give it a little pleasure; [all for this body] that I injure others and make mistakes.” “What is the goal of it all? Can senses ever be the goal? Can enjoyment of pleasure ever be the goal? Can this life ever be the goal of the soul? If it is, better die this moment; do not want this life!”

“All the power of knowledge and wealth once made has passed away — all the sciences of the ancients, lost, lost forever. Nobody knows how. That teaches us a grand lesson. Vanity of vanities; all is vanity and vexation of the spirit.”

“How long will you go on? How long? Will you be like that old man who had spent all his life in prison and, when let out, begged to be brought back into his dark and filthy dungeon cell? This is the case with us all! We cling with all our might to this low, dark, filthy cell called this world — to this hideous, chimerical existence where we are kicked about like a football by every wind that blows.”

“Think of the slavery in which we are [bound]. Every beautiful form I see, every sound of praise I hear, immediately attracts me; every word of blame I hear immediately repels me. Every fool has an influence over my mind. Every little movement in the world makes an impression upon me. Is this a life worth living? So when you have realized the misery of this physical existence — when you have become convinced that such a life is not worth living — you have made the first step towards Jnana.”

“I hate this world, this dream, this horrible nightmare with its churches and chicaneries, its books and blackguardisms, its fair faces and false hearts, its howling righteousness on the surface and utter hollowness beneath, and, above all, its sanctified shopkeeping.”

***Swami Vivekananda***

“Knowing that thou art nothing, that thou canst do nothing, and art worth just nothing, thou wilt quietly embrace passive drynesses, thou wilt endure horrible desolations; thou wilt undergo spiritual martyrdoms and inward torments. By means of this Nothing thou must die in thy self, many ways, at all times, and all hours, Keeping thy self in Nothing, thou wilt bar the door against every thing that is not God”.

“But the happy Soul which is gotten to this holy hatred of it self, lives overwhelmed, drowned and swallowed up in the depth of its own Nothing.”

St. Molinos

“There was, he said, one infallible rule, and that was to have no care about the worldly life.”

“The infinite depth repels and horrifies me; the infinite height attracts and satisfies me.”

“Every man of the present day, if we go deep enough into the contradiction between his conscience and his life, is in a state of despair.”

“...there are two inevitable conditions of life, confronting all of us, which destroy its whole meaning; (1) death, which may at any moment pounce upon each of us; and (2) the transitoriness of all our works, which so soon pass away and leave no trace...And therefore, however we may conceal it from ourselves, we cannot help seeing that the significance of our life cannot lie in our personal fleshly existence...”

“You are horrified by the death of those crushed by the tower, burned in the circus; but your death, equally as frightful and as inevitable, is here, before you. You are wrong to conceal it or to forget it; unlocked for, it is only more hideous."

Leo Tolstoy

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

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

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

“All civilizations become defunct. All species die out. There is even an expiration date on the universe itself.”, “...the universe as nothing in motion.”

“Then it begins. This can’t be happening, you think— if you can think at all, if you are anything more than a whirlwind of panic. In reality, though, anything can happen now. This is the whispering undercurrent that creeps into your thoughts— nothing is safe and nothing is off limits. All of a sudden something was set in motion that changed everything. Something descended upon you that had been circling above your life from the day you were born. And for the first time you feel that which you have never felt before— the imminence of your own death. There is no possibility for self-deception now. The paradox that came with consciousness is done with. Only horror is left. This is what is real. This is the only thing that was ever real, however unreal it may have seemed.”

“No self now, consciously speaking. No feeling your old self or new self, false imaginings if you think about it, self-conscious nothings everywhere you look. No one to hear you weep or scream, making a go of it on your own, bye-bye. No bosom of nature, abandoned on the doorstep of the supernatural, minds full of flagrantly joyless possibilities, a real blunder that was, the human tragedy. No reality to speak of, nobody here but us puppets, contradictory beings, mutants who embody the contorted logic of a paradox. No immortality, ordinary folk and average mortals coming and going, can’t stay long, got an appointment with nonexistence, no alternative to consider, being alive was all right while it lasted, so they say. No life story with a happy ending to tell, only a contrivance of horror, then nothingness— and nothing else. No Free Will-to-live, no redemption by a Will-to-die, how depressing. No philosophies to peddle, pessimism a no-sale, optimism had to close its doors, too wicked to pass code. No meanings or mind-games, repressional mechanisms broke down, self-deception shuttered its windows. No awakening from a dream within a dream, mutation of consciousness— parent of all horrors, best not mess with it, extinction looking better all the time. No more pleasure, what there was of it, a few crumbs left by chaos at feast, still a good supply of pain, though. No praiseworthy incentives, just bowel-movement pressures, potato-mashing relativism. No euthanasia, bad for the business of life, you’re on your own there, but watch out for the eternal return, most horrible idea in the universe. No loving God, omnipotence off duty and omniscience on leave, the deity He dead— the horror, the horror, even the skies of spring and the flowers of summer must ever afterward be poison, blame it on the piecing together of dissociated knowledge. No compassionate Buddha, Body Snatchers got him, heard tell, or some kind of thing, maybe next lifetime. No Good-versus-Evil formulas around here, Azathoth running the show, human beings a mistake or a joke, something pernicious making a nightmare of our world. No being normal and real, the uncanny coming at you full speed, startling and dreadful. No ego-death— enlightenment by accident. No way out of harm’s way, better never to have been, worst saved for last. No Last Messiah, buried in the fingernails of midwives and pacifier makers, gone the way of messiahs past. No bleakness either, a failure indeed. No terror management by isolation, anchoring, distraction, sublimation. No tragedies to read or to write, death kept at a safe distance past the vanishing point down the road. No escape routes into a useless bliss, useless existence, malignantly so…”

Thomas Ligotti

“This is direct proof that existence has no real value in itself; for what is boredom but the feeling of the emptiness of life?”

Author Schopenhauer

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

The lunatic’s visions of horror are all drawn from the material of daily fact. Our civilization is founded on the shambles, and every individual existence goes out in a lonely spasm of helpless agony. If you protest, my friend, wait until you arrive there yourself.”

“Conceive yourself, if possible, suddenly stripped of all the emotion with which your world now inspires you, and try to imagine it AS IT EXISTS, purely by itself, without your favorable or unfavorable, hopeful or apprehensive comment. It will be almost impossible for you to realize such a condition of negativity and deadness.”

William James

“A thousand varieties of man -- Piltdown, Neanderthal, Chellean, Acheulean, Mousterian, Aurignacian, Cro-magnon, Rhodesian, Pekin man -- lived for thousands of years, fought, thought, invented, painted, carved, made children, and left no more to posterity than a few flints and scratches, forgotten for millennia and found only by the picks and spades of our inquisitive day.   A thousand civilizations have disappeared under the ocean or the earth, leaving, like Atlantis, merely a legend behind...”

Will Durant

“The literature of religious experience abounds in references to the pains and terrors overwhelming those who have come, too suddenly, face to face with some manifestation of the Mysterium tremendum. In theological language, this fear is due to the incompatibility between man’s egotism and the divine purity, between man’s self-aggravated separateness and the infinity of God.”

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

“The saint is one who knows that every moment of our human life is a moment of crisis; for at every moment we are called upon to make an all-important decision- to choose between the way that leads to death and the spiritual darkness and the way that leads towards light and life; between interests exclusively temporal and the eternal order...”

“The general acceptance of a doctrine that denies meaning and value to the world as a whole,

while assigning them in a supreme degree to certain arbitrarily selected parts of the totality, can only have evil and disastrous results...We have thought of ourselves as members of supremely meaningful and valuable communities – deified nations, divine classes and what not – existing within a meaningless universe.”

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Aldous Huxley

“One night in long bygone times, man awoke and saw himself. He saw that he was naked under cosmos, homeless in his own body. All things dissolved before his testing thought, wonder above wonder, horror above horror unfolded in his mind.”

“And if we use the word in a religious sense, only the latter description fits. For here, none has yet been clear about what he is longing for, but one has always a heartfelt awareness of what one is longing away from, namely the earthly vale of tears, one’s own unendurable condition. If awareness of this predicament is the deepest stratum of the soul, as argued above, then it is also understandable why the religious yearning is felt and experienced as fundamental.”

“When a human being takes his life in depression, this is a natural death of spiritual causes. The modern barbarity of ‘saving’ the suicidal is based on a hair-raising misapprehension of the nature of existence.”

Peter Zapffe

“When all choices are equal, equality is compatible with total randomness. If all choices are equal, then the choice of death is equal to the choice of life. If life is meaningless, then God

is nothing. But a funny thing happened on the way to nihilistic self-destruction. It was precisely through radical disbelief that I discovered an evolutionary basis for God. Most secular people in the West are simply not ruthless enough in their nihilism to vivisect belief to death. Yet vivisecting belief to death exposes how the original monotheistic conception of God likely arose out of ruthless realism. Monotheism may have originated out of a skeptical, nihilistic, materialistic objectivity that annihilated the biologically based subjectivity of the self, and thus created something ‘out of nothing’.”

“My objective is to kill myself. Now how can I explain this? If reason cannot determine ultimate values, then how do I explain the facts of my values? I can begin to explain myself through the Nietzschean distinction between truth and life. It is a modern delusion to believe that pursuit of truth has any necessary correspondence with life-affirming values. To not gloss over the forks between these paths with myths and compromises, but to confront them openly, directly, and as far as possible, without illusion, can lead to the path of truth and death.”

“Just as life is a process, the undoing of life is also a process or “progress”. My writings are daily affirmations of death. I am painting myself into a corner until there is only one inevitable act left. I am killing every belief and breaking down every value that upholds my very life until what is left

is nothing. An experiment in nihilism, I am destroying all values that uphold life until I am left with nowhere to stand.”

“When all choices are equal, equality is compatible with total randomness. If all choices are equal, then the choice of death is equal to the choice of life. If life is meaningless, then God is nothing.”

“Can one live a philosophy of the nihilistic, reconciling meaninglessness with every thought and emotion at every moment? If active unbelief were the highest organizing principle of a life, would the consequence be rational self-destruction? Could suicide represent the pinnacle of the rational life realized?”

“The implications of life’s meaninglessness have not been elicited with sufficient ruthlessness. My methodology is honesty to the point of absurdity; honesty without mercy; honesty unprejudiced by morals, aesthetics, faith, or hope. When all illusions have been dispelled, at the end of overcoming subjectivities, biases, and prejudices towards life, one encounters the possibility of rational negation of self-interest; rational self-annihilation; rational self-destruction. The experiment in nihilism is to seek out precisely those truths that are most deadly and destructive to me. To will death through truth and truth through death.”

Mitchell Heisman

“We fear that if theism is dismissed, only a bottomless pit remains.”

“Many forms of religion are little more than cultural manifestations of the fear of nothingness. That is why people become hysterical when theism is challenged.”

“It is one thing to be unaware that your existence has no meaning...it is quite another to deal with that reality consciously and to battle against it.”

“It means that if life has no ultimate meaning, we alone of all other creatures embrace the threat of meaninglessness.”

“The fate of all living creatures is to lose, but only human life knows this self-consciously. It is not easy to be human.”

John Shelby Spong

“They have a feeling of integral selfhood, of personal identity, and of the permanency of things. They believe in their own continuity – in being made of good, lasting stuff – and in meaning and order and justice in life and in the universe. In the most fortunate cases, there is a good, healthy unconditional surrender and submission to the norms of nicety and normalcy of the average, square-headed, stuffed-shirted, sanctimonious, middle-class North-American church-goer and bridge player, with his pseudo-intelligent, quasi-progressive, simili-cultured, platitudinal small-talk. Happy days! In this the best of all possible worlds. One doesn't notice until too late. In short: All is well (since nobody notices the end of 'all that is well') until one night: the day's work is well done and all the ships' crapulant fools frantically engulf themselves in a deadly serious game of bridge (till it is time for the night-cap and the tranquillizer). One of the 'dummies,' a champion brass polisher, suffering from an acute case of uncaused depression, goes to lie down for a while; he doesn't have a dime for the jukebox; the room is painfully satiated with embarrassing silence. Instantly and unexpectedly he is struck by an execrative curse of inverted serendipity. He suddenly, in unbearable agony, sees himself as an upholstered pile of bones and knuckles, with the softer parts slung up in a bad on the front side, and his whole like as a ludicrously brief interlude between embryo and corpse, two repulsive caricatures of himself. As for this flying farce, this nauseatingly trivial burlesque in a whirling coffin, and its aimless, whimsical flight through the void: 'What is it all about?' The question permeates him with dread and anguish, with 'ontological despair' and 'existential frustration.'”

“The world is what it seems to be to a dry, unimaginative, down to earth, square-headed stuffshirt about mid-morning after a good night's rest. And as for such questions as what it means to live and die – there's nothing to it, it is commonplace, almost everybody does it. We are thrown into an absurdly indifferent world of sticks and stones and stars and emptiness. Our “situation” is that of a man who falls out of the empire state building. Any attempt at “justifying” our brief, accelerating fall, the inconceivably short interlude between our breath-taking realization of our “situation” and our inexorable total destruction, is bound to be equally ludicrous; i.e. whether we choose to say: (a) “This is actually quite comfortable as long as it lasts, let's make the best of it.” or (b) “Let us at least do something useful while we can,” and we start counting the windows on the building. In any event, both attitudes presuppose an ability to divert ourselves from realizing our desperate “situation,” to abstract, as it were, every single moment of the “fall” out of its irreparable totality, to cut our lives up into small portions with petty, short time-span goals.”

“If a student has difficulties in getting to the university because of their fear of stepping on cracks in the pavement, this is not a problem to be taken seriously or the cognitive level; in other words, it doesn't raise the problem: 'is it really dangerous to step on cracks in the pavement?' It is quite a different story if the student has 'working inhibitions,' because he has struck against the stark problem of death and annihilation. His stomach is clawed to shreds, his breathing throttled by the anguish of nothingness, the dread of being no more.”

“Every human being should be forced to mature beyond what is biologically advantageous, mentally 'healthy,' forced to face his fate, and open his eyes and mind to the unbearably agonizing insight into 'the wild, banal, grotesque, loathsome carnival in the world's graveyard.”

Herman Tønnessen

“Revelations can be terrifying.”

“The most empathic epiphanies are those that arrive in times of darkness and despair.”

“The world into which I was ushered was strange, weird, uncanny, significant, and terrifying beyond belief.”

Houston Smith

Human thought undergoes a complete transformation in despair and terror, discovering new powers which lead it to those sources of truth considered unimportant by other persons.”

“Kierkegaard himself tells us this at the end of Repetition. And he goes on to explain that everything finite becomes insignificant for a person with a proper understanding of his relationship with God. But then, this was known long ago to the wise men of pagan times, who invented self-regulated (autonomous) ethics. And if it is true that everything worldly is a matter of indifference to the spirit, and the essence of the "religious" is that it teaches one to scorn what is finite, then why bother, why turn away from Socrates?”

“He (Kierkegaard) notes in his journal: "Only horror that has turned to despair can develop a man's higher powers.”

Lev Shestov

“The burden is not a local one, peculiar to those first hearers, but one which is borne by the whole human race. It consists not of political oppression or poverty or hard work. It is far deeper than that. It is felt by the rich as well as the poor for it is something from which wealth and idleness can never deliver us. The burden borne by mankind is a heavy and crushing thing.”

A. W. Tozer

“For reason annihilates and imagination completes, integrates or totalizes; reason by itself alone kills, and it is imagination that gives life. If it is true that imagination by itself alone, in giving us life without limit, leads us to lose our identity in the All and also kills us as individuals, it kills us by excess of life. Reason, the head, speaks to us the word Nothing! imagination, the heart, the word All! and between all and nothing, by the fusion of the all and the nothing within us, we live in God, who is All, and God lives in us who, without Him, are nothing-. Reason reiterates, Vanity of vanities! all is vanity! And imagination answers, Plenitude of plenitudes! all is plenitude! And thus we live the vanity of plenitude or the plenitude of vanity.”

Miguel de Unamuno

“But the bottom in the spiritual journey is also the top. To be no one is to be everyone. To be no self is to be the true Self. To be nothing is to be everything. In a sense, it is to be God.”

“This monk chose the way of spiritual discipline to become the Other. There is at least one other way of negotiating the spiral staircase. It is by passing through great tragedy or physical and mental suffering. God leads some people through the most terrible anguish and pain to the same place.”

Thomas Keating

“Only he knows God who recognizes that all creatures are nothingness.”

“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.”

“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.”

“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.”

“All that is created is nothing, all far from and foreign to the soul.”

Meister Eckhart

“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.”

Thomas Merton

“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.”

“How far different from this is the instruction of Christ: that, we should rather despise the whole world!”

“The light (saith Christ) shineth in darkness and the dark comprehendeth it not. Who could believe this? Who hath heard the like- that the light should shine in darkness, and yet, the darkness still remain in darkness, and not be enlightened?”

“I will say, consistently with the use of all words and languages- all men are no man, and all things are nothing!”

“He condemns those desires of glory, wealth, wisdom righteousness of one's own, and all the things in which the world trusts.”

Martin Luther

“That is the terrible fix we are in. If the universe is not governed by an absolute goodness, then all our efforts are in the long run hopeless. But if it is, then we are making ourselves enemies to that goodness every day, and are not in the least likely to do any better tomorrow, and so our case is hopeless again. We cannot do without it. and we cannot do with it. God is the only comfort, He is also the supreme terror...”

“Reality, looked at steadily, is unbearable.”

***C. S. Lewis***

“On the other hand, reason shows it the delusion of overrating worldly things, while faith teaches what alone can satisfy its cravings. Memory reminds the soul how all earthly joys end, recalling the death of those who lived at ease; how some died suddenly and were soon forgotten, how others, once so prosperous, are now buried beneath the ground and men pass by the graves where they lie, the prey of worms, while the mind recalls many other such incidents.”

“I really see no good in this world and its ways...”

“Try not to fear these and commit yourselves wholly to God, come what may. What does

it matter if we die? How many times have our bodies not mocked us? Should we not

occasionally mock them in our turn?”

“I do not know how much of the world we really leave when we say that we are leaving everything for God's sake, if we do not withdraw ourselves from the chief thing of all -- namely, our kinsfolk.”

***St. Theresa of Avila***

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

***Jesus***

“Again, while you were dancing, many a soul has passed away amid sharp sufferings; thousands and tens of thousands were lying all the while on beds of anguish, some perhaps untended, unconsoled, in fevers, and all manner of painful diseases. Will you not rouse yourself to a sense of pity for them? At all events, remember that a day will come when you in your turn will lie on your bed of sickness, while others dance and make merry.”

***St. Francis de Sales***

The Nothing of the world is seen through the filthiest of lenses. The meaninglessness of human activity is found not within a subjective value judgment, but rather in the ignorant finitude of all human activity. The 'pushing forward' of most human mindsets is one that is built upon the ignorance of the experience of Nihilism. Distractions and diversions are written into the language of 'normal' human beings. What does one do when these distractions and diversions fail? What does one do when one comes 'face to face' with Nihilism? Is suicide a 'rational' option in the face of Nothingness? Is there a 'path' that allows one to live alongside the Nothing? Is the 'naked anxiety' found within human experience too much of a burden for one to endure, never mind pursue, in the constructing of a world-view? Can one build a philosophy of religion based upon the Nothing of the world? Beyond the question of 'possibility' with regards to constructing such a philosophy of religion, is there some demand to do so? Does the Nihilistic experience contain any 'constructive' content that may allow itself to be interpreted as it as a religious experience? Cioran's words show at least the motivation for such a possibility: “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.”

Humans are damned to philosophize, whether this is done in the ignorant fashion of the everyday person who is fooled into thinking he is free, smart, and comfortable while in the chains of his cliches or whether in the style of the lofty analytic philosopher who believes that he is 'making a difference' when he puts on his suit and tie, stands up in front of a room of seven, and delivers his paper on 'counter-factuals'. As it is practiced in the American Universities, philosophy has become seemingly nothing more than a fancy Sudoku puzzle used to satiate the boredom of 'intellectuals'. Within some exception, the claims of Nihilism, taken in their overlapping declarations concerning the negative status of moral, existential, epistemological, and metaphysical 'truths', have been dispelled, at best, as 'unanswerable', and at worst, as 'unworthy' for concern, within most of the analytical tradition. Ultimate questions have been diminished into a clash of one incomplete argument against another; working under the guise of a Socratic method, but without a mindset that even remotely resembles that of a 'Socrates'. 'Intellectual' notions of Nihilism are always stillborn. Why is it, then, that philosophers move forward with an attitude of self-assurance, beyond any pragmatic or worldly fashion, without any ground beneath them? Does the equivalent of a 'One has to live' tag-line suffice, amongst all the convoluted jargon, for today's philosophers?

Schopenhauer wrote that “philosophy can never do more than interpret and explain what is given.” Philosophy is the unending 'Why?” in an attempt to open up the mystery of being, to reach out towards the ground of all things. Philosophy lacks any normative motivation in and of itself; philosophy is only concerned with the consequences of a particular stance. Philosophy, then, if it is to contribute anything to our project, must derive an analysis, or a 'map of consequences', that are drawn out and put into a new language that is grounded in the direct human experience of Nihilism. This is the preambles of such a task. Does philosophy, as defined, therefore, have any contribution to make concerning the experience of Nihilism?

There is a hidden meaningless throughout all of the worlds activities that can be drawn out from such an experience of Nihilism. Before going too far, what do we mean when we speak of an 'experience of Nihilism'? We must first ay out the ontological basis of this Nothingness, starting with a description of the experience itself along with some of its 'characteristics', only then will there be any possibility of conceiving the development of a language of Nihilism. Due to my lack of creativity, I will quote, at length, Tønnessen's graphic depiction of such an experience:

“They have a feeling of integral selfhood, of personal identity, and of the permanency of things. They believe in their own continuity – in being made of good, lasting stuff – and in meaning and order and justice in life and in the universe. In the most fortunate cases, there is a good, healthy unconditional surrender and submission to the norms of nicety and normalcy of the average, square-headed, stuffed-shirted, sanctimonious, middle-class North-American church-goer and bridge player, with his pseudo-intelligent, quasi-progressive, simili-cultured, platitudinal small-talk. Happy days! In this the best of all possible worlds. One doesn't notice until too late. In short: All is well (since nobody notices the end of 'all that is well') until one night: the day's work is well done and all the ships' crapulant fools frantically engulf themselves in a deadly serious game of bridge (till it is time for the night-cap and the tranquillizer). One of the 'dummies,' a champion brass polisher, suffering from an acute case of uncaused depression, goes to lie down for a while; he doesn't have a dime for the jukebox; the room is painfully satiated with embarrassing silence. Instantly and unexpectedly he is struck by an execrative curse of inverted serendipity. He suddenly, in unbearable agony, sees himself as an upholstered pile of bones and knuckles, with the softer parts slung up in a bad on the front side, and his whole like as a ludicrously brief interlude between embryo and corpse, two repulsive caricatures of himself. As for this flying farce, this nauseatingly trivial burlesque in a whirling coffin, and its aimless, whimsical flight through the void: 'What is it all about?' The question permeates him with dread and anguish, with 'ontological despair' and 'existential frustration.'”

Nihilism must also be promptly distinguished from mental illness, more specifically from being represented in some form of worldliness. Although there is much more that needs to be said regarding this issue, the sentiment can at least be acknowledged in the words of Becker: “Full humanness means full fear and trembling, at least some of the waking day...When you get a person to look at the sun as it bakes down on the daily carnage taking place on earth, the ridiculous accidents, the utter fragility of life, the powerlessness of those he thought most powerful—what comfort can you give him from a psychotherapeutic point of view?” St. Seraphim Rose expresses the distinction this way: “Nihilism is, most profoundly, a spiritual disorder, and it can be overcome only by spiritual means; and there has been no attempt whatever in the contemporary world to apply such means.”

One last mention of the psychological aspect is worthy, if only because these words are espoused from a suicide as a direct cause of Nihilism. These are the words of Mitchell Heisman with regards to what psychology has to say concerning Nihilism:

“Can the meaninglessness of existence be cured with therapy? Lie therapy, whether religious or secular, is overwhelmingly the normative state of the human race. Put another way, there may be sound psychological reasons why radical nihilism is not a condition prescribed by therapists. Yet if psychologists are scientists, and their own methodology confirms the scientific view of human beings as material things in motion, on what grounds can they criticize nihilism in itself? Only insofar as psychologists are not scientists; insofar as they are non-objective partisans of the ‘life party’ are psychologists fundamentally and irrevocably biased against consideration of my point of view. Psychological explanations can be used, not only to evade the nihilistic, but to evade the scientific equation of the larger material world with a material view of one’s own mind — and thus to misunderstand the problem.”

Philosophy, as we have defined it, however, does not demand any one interpretation of Nihilism over another; one may choose a reductionist, materialist explanation as easily as one may choose one of Transcendence. The former is found within the worldly philosophy/psychology and metaphysical naturalism of science, while the latter normally falls under the domain of religion or theology and the subsequent dying 'languages' developed within these disciplines. There will be an effort to avoid the ambiguous nature of the term 'religious', as it is almost inevitably dragged down into the world of pragmatism and self-concern. Rather, the more 'neutral' term 'Transcendence' will be substituted in its place. 'Transcendence' here need not be concerned with anything accept that which can be referred to as Wholly-Other; and ought further to be distinguished from 'supernatural', another abused term containing too many 'religious' connotations. The Nihilistic experience is one, we claim, that best holds to a Transcendent interpretation, although the experience of Nihilism is equally founded within the dogmas of naturalism.

Whether this Transcendent interpretation of Nihilism is truly understood by anyone, as lacking any sense of worldly 'optimism' or 'completion' holds as a criterion for if a person has experienced Nihilism on any substantive level or not. As a result of this Transcendent interpretation, hopefully to be expanded upon throughout these thoughts, one may find this task to be wholly uninteresting due to a lack of 'relatibility', and also for the reason that it shall not contain any sort of explicit self-referential 'salvation'. For those who have not suffered the overwhelming experience of Nothingness, for those who still find 'something' within the world, these words will most than likely be tossed away and labeled as 'whining and pouting'. To interpret a Taoist saying into the relevance of Nihilism: the common people will laugh at it, the 'intellectual' will understand but not experience, and the one who experiences will be left to the Nothingness of the world.

Nihilism may also be expressed in the form of a question: first, put into your mind the most meaningful 'thing' of your existence, whether this is family, a project, a cause, a nation, or even oneself. Now, can you imagine what you hold to be most meaningful, the thing that makes your existence come across as a real possibility, as being worthless, as utterly void of all meaning? To answer in the affirmative is to have experienced a deconstructive-terror that runs through one's entire being. There is a vanishing of any ground that one has placed under the feet of existence.

James puts it this way: “Conceive yourself, if possible, suddenly stripped of all the emotion with which your world now inspires you, and try to imagine it AS IT EXISTS, purely by itself, without your favorable or unfavorable, hopeful or apprehensive comment. It will be almost impossible for you to realize such a condition of negativity and deadness.” And although Nihilism is found universally within the human condition, the experience is still only to be received in piecemeal, which informs us on why its extreme forms are so rare.

Nietzsche, concerning Nihilism, had a term he referred to as the Absurd Valuation. He puts his description in the mouth of his Zarathustra: “What is your greatest experience? It is the hour of the great contempt. The hour in which even your happiness becomes repulsive to you, and even your reason and virtue. The hour when you say: "What good is my happiness! It is poverty and dirt and wretched contentment. But my happiness should justify existence itself! The hour when you say: "What good is my reason! does it long for knowledge as the lion for his food? It is poverty and dirt and wretched contentment!" The hour when you say: "What good are my virtues?! As yet they have not made me rage with passion. How weary I am of my good and evil! It is all poverty and dirt and wretched contentment!”

I prefer the term Absurd Perspective. This is the 'revelation' of the paralyzing nature of Nihilism that comes from the absence of values, hence making all judgments, movements, efforts, concerns, offenses as baseless as any other; we are left with any response or action being reduced to Absurdity, since humans are necessarily forced to make value judgments in a valueless universe. Without moral judgments, no human action could take place. With all possibilities equivalent there is no right or wrong, there is no up or down, all possibilities drop off, there is only Nothing. Kierkegaard states it as such: “Anxiety is freedom’s possibility; this anxiety alone is, through faith, absolutely formative, since it consumes all finite ends, discovers all their deceptions.”

We could also express the experience of Nihilism in the simplest of terms: all worldly endeavors are futile. However, cliches, as such, will never do, since, as Heidegger points out, cliches are nothing but a form of empty 'idle talk' riddled with 'ambiguity' of a passing off as 'knowing'. Is there a 'message' that is missed when we speak of Nihilism in such cursory ways? If we want to develop a language of Nihilism that is not simply naturalistic, that is beyond the dead myths of the worldly religions, and moreover, that is not simply idle-talk that contributes nothing more than to a premature suicide, then we must proceed past such banalities.

For those still questioning the ontological status of Nihilism, there must be a mention of the concept of 'deep-time', which the human brain is not seemingly built to handle, allowing most of us to live safely, out of sight, out of mind of the horrors that underpin self-conscious existence. Human minds have not evolved to properly handle the vast amounts of time, the billions of years of evolution of the past, but rather have developed a local, restricted conception of the 'small' world they presently find themselves surrounded by. What is the significance of 'deep time'? The 'problem' of the denial of Nihilism, followed by the proposing of a meaning within the world of 'deep time', comes from the fact that most of human existence has been completely erased without a trace of their even 'being here', except what can be found of 'them' in the strands of our DNA.

Ligotti points this out:“All civilizations become defunct. All species die out. There is even an expiration date on the universe itself...the universe as nothing in motion.” Durant puts it a little more eloquently: “A thousand varieties of man -- Piltdown, Neanderthal, Chellean, Acheulean, Mousterian, Aurignacian, Cro-magnon, Rhodesian, Pekin man -- lived for thousands of years, fought, thought, invented, painted, carved, made children, and left no more to posterity than a few flints and scratches, forgotten for millennia and found only by the picks and spades of our inquisitive day.   A thousand civilizations have disappeared under the ocean or the earth, leaving, like Atlantis, merely a legend behind...” Lastly, Vivekananda: “All the power of knowledge and wealth once made has passed away — all the sciences of the ancients, lost, lost forever. Nobody knows how. That teaches us a grand lesson. Vanity of vanities; all is vanity and vexation of the spirit.” With this fact of existence, why is it that one humans still insist in instilling a sense of meaning to their lives? Why can someone sit there with a smile on their face, proclaim 'But my life is meaningful!', in the face of the consequences of 'deep time', and not be seen as psychologically or intellectually deficient?

As mentioned, there will be an emphasis on the direct experience of Nihilism, suggesting the frailty of such cliches and 'intellectualizing'. Swami Vivekananda's words could not be more relevant:

“In one form or another, we are all in it. It is a most difficult and intricate state of things to understand. It has been preached in every country, taught everywhere, but only believed in by a few, because until we get the experiences ourselves we cannot believe in it (my emphasis). What does it show? Something very terrible. For it is all futile. Time, the avenger of everything, comes, and nothing is left. He swallows up the saint and the sinner, the king and the peasant, the beautiful and the ugly; he leaves nothing. Everything is rushing towards that one goal, destruction. Our knowledge, our arts, our sciences, everything is rushing towards it. None can stem the tide, none can hold it back for a minute. We may try to forget it, in the same way that persons in a plague-stricken city try to create oblivion by drinking, dancing, and other vain attempts, and so becoming paralysed. So we are trying to forget, trying to create oblivion by all sorts of sense-pleasures. And this is Maya.”

Nietzsche, the so-called 'Nihilistic-prophet', also stresses the need to experience Nihilism. In his words: “...because nihilism represents the ultimate logical conclusion of our great values and ideals— because we must experience nihilism before we can find out what value these "values" really had.”

There is one well-documented case of suicide due to Nihilism in the writing of Mitchell Heisman. Heisman asks: “Can one live a philosophy of the nihilistic, reconciling meaninglessness with every thought and emotion at every moment? If active unbelief were the highest organizing principle of a life, would the consequence be rational self-destruction? Could suicide represent the pinnacle of the rational life realized?” His suicide suggests the impossibility of such an existence.

In his two-thousand page suicide note, Heisman expresses a propulsion towards a new language of Nihilism that though he may have been seeking after, he could not find. He describes his ambitions accordingly: “The implications of life’s meaninglessness have not been elicited with sufficient ruthlessness. My methodology is honesty to the point of absurdity; honesty without mercy; honesty unprejudiced by morals, aesthetics, faith, or hope. When all illusions have been dispelled, at the end of overcoming subjectivities, biases, and prejudices towards life, one encounters the possibility of rational negation of self-interest; rational self-annihilation; rational self-destruction. The experiment in nihilism is to seek out precisely those truths that are most deadly and destructive to me. To will death through truth and truth through death.”

Underhill, a hundred-years earlier, describes the seemingly necessary nature of an undertaking such that Heisman pursued: “But the true intellectualist, who concedes nothing to instinct or emotion, is obliged in the end to adopt some form of sceptical philosophy. The horrors of nihilism, in fact, can only be escaped by the exercise of faith...” All the same, Heisman lacked such a relevant language of 'faith'. Is there anything behind this thought that drives two thinkers, as seemingly as diverse as Heisman and Underhill, that has been forgotten amongst the business of the world, which suggests something fundamental about the human condition? More importantly, there is the issue of whether 'something' is missing in Heisman's interpretation of Nihilism or if Underhill is 'guilty' of falling pray to the fear of a full-blooded Nihilism. One is driven to 'faith' and the other to suicide. Is one of them 'right'?

Throughout Heisman's expansive suicide note one finds it replete with many other sentiments that have been put forth by both 'saints' and other 'religiously' minded people, although stated in a wholly naturalistic interpretation of a Nihilism that lacks any notion of Transcendence. And even though he expresses, at least in part, some desire to move past a strictly naturalist viewpoint, he was unable to do so. The following quote from Heisman shows at least a hint for the possibility of a language that moves Nihilism past a wholly-naturalistic view, while not entirely escaping its grasp. Worth mentioning is that we shouldn't take what Heisman has to say here in its simplest form, which is tempting to do with the words that he has chosen (reducing his 'discovery' down to an 'evolutionary basis), i.e. the common criticism of 'God' as arising from some pragmatic function which stems from a place of 'desperation', as a need for an 'escape' from the human condition. This would be to miss the deeper interpretation of grounding 'God' within and essentially as Nihilism, rather than as an answer derived for comfort.

“When all choices are equal, equality is compatible with total randomness. If all choices are equal, then the choice of death is equal to the choice of life. If life is meaningless, then God is nothing. But a funny thing happened on the way to nihilistic self-destruction. It was precisely through radical disbelief that I discovered an evolutionary basis for God. Most secular people in the West are simply not ruthless enough in their nihilism to vivisect belief to death. Yet vivisecting belief to death exposes how the original monotheistic conception of God likely arose out of ruthless realism. Monotheism may have originated out of a skeptical, nihilistic, materialistic objectivity that annihilated the biologically based subjectivity of the self, and thus created something ‘out of nothing’.”

A negative appropriation of a Nihilism, such as Heisman espouses, simply exemplifies that the distractions of life have not broken down for such a person; the stranglehold of illusion that worldly meaning has is cancerous to the Transcendental. Worldly meaning spreads into and infects all aspects of our existence, allowing even the most mundane and ridiculous actions to be experienced as 'meaningful'. Assuming an intrinsic value to their being, the finite, nonsensical, ignorant existence of the human is put forth as an ideal with what seems as a complete disregard for the consequences of such a perspective. The words of Kempus have still not traveled far enough: “He is the truly wise man, who counteth all earthly things as dung...”. Ligotti makes this point in his unrelentingly pessimistic tone when he declares: “As a threat to human continuance, nihilism is as dead as God.” A participation with, rather than a fleeing from, is necessary to bring out Nihilism's uttermost forms. Why would anyone want to 'participate' in Nihilism?

Instead, the unreality of the world is pushed forth in a form of either an ironically morbid 'optimism' or a blindfolded indifference. One sees this everyday as he confronts another who projects a labored smile as he speaks through his teeth about 'how great it is to be alive.” Or the restrained shudder of inconvenience that comes from one who has just heard the news that a relative or friend has died. Swami Vivekananda passionately writes: “We cling with all our might to this low, dark, filthy cell called this world — to this hideous, chimerical existence where we are kicked about like a football by every wind that blows.” These words are not for the people under the spell of the world.

The illusory, subjective nature of all value judgments that pushes us forward, combined with our inability to live without them, is Absurd. As 'solutions' to the Absurd, there are some who put forth a sense of irony, as suggested by Nagel, while others assert various forms of 'indifference', and while these may be the closest conception of 'equanimity' that one can seemingly grasp in the face of Nihilism, this is still only a process of reasoning about Nihilism, and therefore will be drowned in the encounter with Nihilism. Irony and indifference is only effectual to those who are still only 'intellectualizing', rather than experiencing, Nihilism. An 'attitude' cannot be reached through a process of one inference to another. The suggestions of irony or indifference not only fail as a 'response' due to lending itself as a distraction from any 'message' that may be found within Nihilism, if there is one to be found, but it is as derisory as requesting the healing of a bullet wound by means of deduction.

How, then, is Nihilism, in its Transcendental interpretation, to be, in any substantial sense, distinguished from naturalism? Is Nihilism necessarily to be reduced to naturalism? Are there characteristics of Nihilism that separates itself from, and go beyond, naturalism? Underhill summarizes naturalism sucintly: “It says in effect: The room in which we find ourselves is fairly comfortable. Draw the curtains, for the night is dark: and let us devote ourselves to describing the furniture.”

With this said, the 'mystical' experience seem to be the only candidate for a 'pushing up' against the horrors of a pure, self-contained naturalism, and may allow an 'opening up' of the transcendent which could give some teeth to the Nihilistic language and allow one to 'live' within the fantastical structure of Nihilism, even if only for an indeterminate amount of time. These transcendent modes of being can be found within the realm of psychedelics. A book in itself is worthy of this topic, but quoting a couple of the psychedelic pioneers may show a sense of the strength in which psychedelics are relevant to Nihilism. Assuming a Transcendent interpretation, the idea of a religious mindset as concern for the Wholly-Other, Smith describes his journey into the Other world as such: “The world into which I was ushered was strange, weird, uncanny, significant, and terrifying beyond belief.” Smith, describing his experience himself in a Transcendental manner, also declares: “Revelations can be terrifying.” The mystical experience is not like anything of this world.

Huxley describes a part of his psychedelic experience as follows: “I found myself all at once on the brink of panic. This, I suddenly felt, was going too far. Too far, even though the going was into intenser beauty, deeper significance. The fear, as I analyze it in retrospect, was of being overwhelmed, of disintegrating under a pressure of reality greater than a mind, accustomed to living most of the time in a cosy world of symbols, could possibly bear. The literature of religious experience abounds in references to the pains and terrors overwhelming those who have come, too suddenly, face to face with some manifestation of the Mysterium tremendum. In theological language, this fear is due to the incompatibility between man’s egotism and the divine purity, between man’s self-aggravated separateness and the infinity of God.” And though Huxley does speak of the beauty of the universe that we are in, he does state “In life, man proposes, God disposes.”

Is there a better explanation for why philosophers and theologians have 'missed the mark' in their sand-trap of pursuing 'rationality' instead of direct experience? Is there any better reason one could give for the seemingly endless stagnation and frustration that ensues from the 'intellectualizing' of these issues? Is there any doubt as to why the dogmas of the naturalist and the dogmas of the worldly 'religious' are trapped in a stalemate with their attempts to 'convince' one another with reason and rationality? Reason and rationality have their place, but if there is not an attempt to go beyond, then one necessarily can only obtain a constrained portion of the human condition. Huxley sums it up with a question: “How many philosophers, how many theologians, how many professional educators have had the curiosity to open this Door in the Wall? The answer, for all practical purposes, is, None.”

There is no need for a concern over 'spookiness'. The particular mystical-type experiences that I have briefly mentioned are not anything special. By 'special', I mean that these experiences can be induced into any one willing to undertake such a task. There is no worry of any 'new age' or 'supernatural' powers underlying any of the claims made here. Any person in the proper set (psychological preparation) and setting (proper surroundings and environment) is welcome to 'test' the results of such an experience for themselves. There is no need for years of meditation, chanting, yoga, or any other traditional 'religious' interlocutors; although these methods, and others, can be used in correlation with psychedelics which may bring out a fuller and deeper experience. One is now simply left to interpret said experience. Is it wholly naturalistic? Is there anything veritical about the psychedelic experience? Speaking from personal experience, the experience that one encounters with the use psychedelics is not only not contradictory with the philosophy of Nihilism, but it rather confirms it quite strongly. This does not prove anything. While one is tempted to refer to the psychedelic experience as an encounter with the Other, with all its Transcendent, noetic, and paradoxical qualities, there is no explicit contradiction in reducing the experience to a naturalist interpretation. This seems to be the reason why Smith pointed out that psychedelics can produce a religious experience, but they do not necessarily produce a religious life,”

Many have spoken of the Nihilistic experience properly, but almost all turn their back from Nihilism into some activity of distraction. As Heidegger says, one is always falling back into the world. This divided-self, this double-mindedness, is one in which there is no escape. To make clear, this 'always falling' has been, for the most part, painted with the mythological language of 'original sin'. This unbridgeable disconnect between the finite and the Infinite has been excepted only 'intellectually' while shunned, in action, by almost all, except the rare few who have the 'stamina' to renounce the world in its entirety and who hold that reality is simply an unreality.

An insight derived from the divided-self, the falling nature of man, is one that has great explanatory power: holding to a dichotomy of authentic/inauthentic or natural/Other, the split within the human consciousness helps explain the way in which people cannot live up to the ideals of philosophy/theology/religion etc. and are doomed to be pulled back down, in all its depravity, into the world leaving one with a feeling of 'being guilty'. The conception of 'guilt', under Heidegger's analysis, gets rescued from a worldly stuckness of a feeling of owing something to someone else or not living up to another's worldly ideals or moral code. 'Guilt', in its existential sense, stems from the 'always falling' condition, as not recognizing, or not even attempting to recognize, one's True-Self; in Nihilism, others become insignificant and the Self becomes one's fascination. Eckhart puts forth a similar sentiment: “Only he knows God who recognizes that all creatures are nothingness.” How different, then, is this Self from the Other? Are they one in the same?

The human, as split between naturalism and the Other, is one that never allows for a full 'enlightenment' to endure. The naturalistic side of humanity, which constantly pulls one down into the world, into the concerns of the finite, into taking serious the transitory nature of all worldly things, cannot be overcome. To overcome would be to be a god. Nietzsche's Uberman, Kierkegaard's Knight of Faith, Heidegger's Equanimity, Vivekananda's wholly unselfish being, are all ideals that cannot be reached, at least in the form of which human beings presently exist. The mystics also attempt to claim a 'reconciliation', but this is only done in the possibility of forgetting the human situation in the fleeting moments of ecstasy. Regardless of the validity of mystical-type experiences, which do hold as a foundational element of human experience, these experiences are drowned in the experience of Nihilism. Meaninglessness subsumes mysticism. Tillich expresses this sentiment exactly when he says: “The experience of meaninglessness is more radical than mysticism. Therefore it transcends the mystical experience.” Tillich emphasizes the role of meaninglessness as fundamental to the 'meaning of life': “The answer must accept, as its precondition, the state of meaninglessness. It is not an answer if it demands the removal of this state; for that is just what cannot be done. He who is in the grip of doubt and meaninglessness cannot liberate himself from this grip but he asks for an answer which is valid within and not outside the situation of despair. He asks for the ultimate foundation of what we have called the 'courage of despair.' There is only one possible answer, if one does not try to escape the question; namely that the acceptance of despair is in itself faith. In this situation the meaning of life is reduced to despair about the meaning of life.”

Ultimate skepticism and doubt are therefore part of the syntax of Nihilism, even when one wishes to interpret their particular mystical experience as wholly-Other and Transcendental. The interpretation of Nihilism is essentially locked into the human situation which is, at least in part, naturalistic. Even if one is let out of this 'prison-house' for a short period of recreation, one must be thrown back into the cell of the Nothing of the world; this is until death allows for a full escape into the Nothingness. This finite/Infinite distinction of the mystical experience can explicitly be found in Saint Theresa: “Oh, what a distress it is for my soul to have to return to hold commerce with this world after having had its conversation in heaven! To have to play a part in the sad farce of this earthly life.”

Where does one go if there is no 'salvation' even within a Transcendent, mystical experience? The majority of unthinking humans retreat into a superficial-selfish interpretation of the religious languages of their time, into the proximity of their family relations, into the distractions of their worldly pleasures. Nihilism is wholly-destructive to the world. The one who experiences Nihilism cannot retreat back into the world of 'things'. 'Things' are all too transparent. The world is dead. I wish to quote Tønnessen once more at length, due to both the unfortunately relative obscurity of his paper and for the clear examples in which he describes a Nihilistic perspective:

“The world is what it seems to be to a dry, unimaginative, down to earth, square-headed stuffshirt about mid-morning after a good night's rest. And as for such questions as what it means to live and die – there's nothing to it, it is commonplace, almost everybody does it. We are thrown into an absurdly indifferent world of sticks and stones and stars and emptiness. Our “situation” is that of a man who falls out of the empire state building. Any attempt at “justifying” our brief, accelerating fall, the inconceivably short interlude between our breath-taking realization of our “situation” and our inexorable total destruction, is bound to be equally ludicrous; i.e. whether we choose to say: (a) “This is actually quite comfortable as long as it lasts, let's make the best of it.” or (b) “Let us at least do something useful while we can,” and we start counting the windows on the building. In any event, both attitudes presuppose an ability to divert ourselves from realizing our desperate “situation,” to abstract, as it were, every single moment of the “fall” out of its irreparable totality, to cut our lives up into small portions with petty, short time-span goals.”

The question comes up once more: Is one forced into madness or to relinquish their existence? Can one confront the Other in an authentic way that is not motivated by a purely selfish need for comfort within the nightmare of existence? Can a language of Nihilism that propagates the Transcendental aspect of meaninglessness be an authentic way to encounter the Other? Is there any place for philosophical thinking in this world of contradictions? One must first accept that one does not know what one is talking about. There is not one person who knows what is 'going on here'. Underhill expresses, fully, the self-criticism that this sort of project is bound to: “If the metaphysician be true to his own postulates, he must acknowledge in the end that we are all forced to live, to think, and at last to die, in an unknown and unknowable world: fed arbitrarily and diligently, yet how we know not, by ideas and suggestions whose truth we cannot test but whose pressure we cannot resist.”

A language of Nihilism reflects the need to confront the transcendental yearning as truly a confrontation, rather than something that one tries to replace with this or that thing, this or that creed. The need for such a language in demonstrated in the words of Huxley: “...the ultimate Reality is not clearly and immediately apprehended, except by those who have made themselves loving, pure in heart and poor in spirit. This being so, it is hardly surprising that a theology based upon the experience of nice, ordinary, unregenerate people should carry so little conviction. This kind of empirical theology is on precisely the same footing as an empirical astronomy, based upon the experience of naked-eye observers.”

A 'new language' of Nihilism is one that must be worked out in order to provide a more adequate account of the Transcendence of and within human experience, as revealed through Nihilism, without specifically holding to either a purely 'religious' or 'naturalist' worldview. This is a language that is not strictly based upon on myth, tradition, nor empirical facts. This language must also not ever be taken as 'complete' ('complete' in a similar way in which 'literal' would be used with regards to interpreting a mythical language), but rather as a symbolic language which is always self-critical and therefore always open for re-interpretation.

Assuming, then, everything, and therefore nothing is justified, a language, as any other, may be able to be developed in order to 'navigate' the 'complexities' of Nihilism. The groundwork for a language of Nihilism, at least up till the present moment, is found in its most 'complete' form in Heidegger's comprehensive language about the human condition as described in Being and Time. These words will only touch on a language that unquestionably needs a fuller development.

Within the 'already-made' language of Heidegger we have concepts of anxiety, moments of vision, everydayness, the call of conscience, the situation, authenticity, uncanniness, resoluteness, and so on, already laid out and defined, that capture key insights into the human condition. These insights and concepts allow for an interpretation of the Nihilistic experience on 'non-naturalistic' terms while still being grounded within the naturalistic aspect of the human condition. There is no need to get bogged down with Heidegger's perspective being essentially 'atheistic' or ' theistic' in itself, since we are specifically looking to move past and discover a language in which a Nihilist may speak about the human situation as he experiences it. Heidegger himself attempts to avoid such presumptuous terms as 'atheistic' or 'theistic' as they are taken to be ultimately restrictive for a full analysis of the human situation. What Heidegger speaks of 'objectively' must still be experienced subjectively. Therefore, Heidegger's analysis may only be seen as an introductory 'map' with regards to speaking about the Other. This 'map' need not guarantee a 'direct' path to the Other. In other words, assuming there can be such a thing as a 'language of Nihilism', the possible interpretations may vary immensely. This 'Other' is an aspect of the developing language that will have to rest in obscurity, not only in these introductory words, but even within a more developed speech-set.

Without the need, yet, to go into detail concerning all of Heidegger's terms or concepts, a bare-bones laying out of the basic structure may be put down in order to help envision the coherency of Heidegger's analysis of human existence as a sturdy foundation for developing a language of Nihilism. Therefore, a very brief summary of what Heidegger refers to as 'Being-Towards-Death' with some of its particularities will be put forth as an example of the foundations of such a language. 'Being-Towards-Death', concisely put, consist of anxiety, in a moment of vision, having a call of conscience that seems to come 'from me and beyond me', that 'gives something to be understood' in an 'indefinite', incommunicable way, and which causes the world to 'drop out' due everything in it sinking into insignificant, yet which pushes one to strive to stay resolute in this anxiety produced experience of knowing that death may happen at any moment, which, as a result, allows one to escape the 'everydayness' of the world in order to turn inward with attempts to discover one's True-Self. Without even going into detail, this structure, with the previous the above words on Nihilism, is one which should not be difficult for one to see how Heidegger's analysis explicitly lends itself to the building of a Nihilistic language.

Is Heidegger's, normally labeled as 'atheistic', analysis really at all different from what the Trappist monk, Thomas Merton, has come to accept? Merton also clearly states the bankruptcy of a constant outward-seeking, hectic search for 'meaning' within life. In comparison to Heidegger, he express the same idea in this language: “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.” Is Merton's use of the word 'God' enough to somehow make any sort of distinction between Heidegger's 'atheism' (which he explicitly denies) and Merton's 'theism'? A Nihilistic language would be one that attempts to reconcile such superficial disparities.

With that said, Heidegger admits that his full conception of 'Being-Towards-Death' is one that is 'fantastical'. That is to say, if we are to develop past a purely Heideggarian analysis of Being, how does one, in fact, proceed in a constant participation with an existence that is drowned in the meaninglessness of the world and which faces annihilation at any moment? Is it possible to even proceed with, or in, such a fantastical structure? Further, what is to be meant by a 'True-Self' as interpreted on not 'wholly naturalistic' terms which avoids, in its analysis of the human condition, from falling back, as some Christians have, into the language of myth and worldly religion? On the other hand, is there any kind of 'positive' substance that stems from the Nihilistic experience which is not to be interpreted as wholly biological, naturalistic, and worldly, as many interpreters of Heidegger have done so far with his language? Heidegger himself dismisses both 'biological' explanations and, seemingly traditional conceptions of, 'God' as too preemptive as they are hindered by assumptions that do not necessarily leave open the mystery of the 'Why?'.

This new language must not rescue one from the Nothingness, rather it is a language that attempts to bring one 'face to face' with the nightmare of existence. The terror of existence is one that opens up the 'positive' content. The unending questioning of 'why?' opens up something that is not wholly natural, yet must still be experienced and discussed within the world. Even the mystical experience, while a blow to naturalism, does not defeat naturalism. One of the few accurate statements that Sartre put forth when describing his particular brand of 'existentialism' was that whether God exists or not, it's all still the same, it makes no difference. The ultimately empty structure of naturalism must be experienced as a ladder into the transcendent, not as an obstacle to be overcome. One must not play with the toys of the world that are crushed into dust with every movement. To keep grabbing at new, vanishing toys is but a distraction of unthinking robots that is not grounded in Nihilism.

This may be able to be made more clear with a mentioning of 'uncanniness'. The feeling that one is 'at home' here in the world is one that is the most common view of human experience. The casual nature in which humans scurry from one project to the next, one pursuit of 'happiness' after another, is the way the world operates on the whole. The question that a philosopher might ask is something along these lines: what is there to be 'casual' about with regards to flying around on a rock at 40,000 miles an hour, around a fireball 'about' to explode causing utter annihilation, in the 'middle' of a possibly endless void, in a possible infinitude of material? That there are 'miles per hour', that there are physical 'things', that one has hands to type, made of what we refer to as 'flesh', and on and on...these are all assumptions taken as 'normal'. That you are reading these words and that they are impregnating your brain immediately as each word, one after the other, is read. Put simply, there is nothing to be casual about. Zapffe finds this 'casualness' counter to the fundamental human condition. He writes: “Such a ‘feeling of cosmic panic’ is pivotal to every human mind.”

In the life-story of Buddha, one finds Kierkegaard's echo: "Oh worldly men! how fatally deluded! beholding everywhere the body brought to dust, yet everywhere the more carelessly living; the heart is neither lifeless wood nor stone, and yet it thinks not 'all is vanishing!'" Then turning, he directed his chariot to go back, and no longer waste his time in wandering. How could he, whilst in fear of instant death, go wandering here and there with lightened heart!”

I believe a quote, at length, from Pascal is not only worthy, but necessary, since it reiterates this point directly, and also lays the groundwork for the need for a further development of a Nihilistic language...

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?

This is Pascal's Wager. The 'intellectuals' who turn Pascal's sentiments on the human condition into a strange math problem concerning probabilities misses the entire environment in which the wager is put forth. This is not a casual decision made from acute calculations of 'finite losses' and 'infinite gains'. That is propaganda language on Pascal's part. As you can see from his own words above, all finitudes fall under the 'lost' category. There are no winners here. One cannot find what one is looking for in this nightmarish existence. This is Pascal's Wager.

In sum, Nihilism is God. God is Nothing.

There are questions upon questions without an answer to be found within these words. This is a work of criticism while leaving a possibility of a 'building up'. Maybe this is a call for help from others in this project. This inadequate sketch of Nihilism only attempts to bring to the attention of those reading that there is some sort of issue regarding Nihilism. It cannot be shut down, ignored, or laughed at. To have any of these reactions is stop being a philosopher. There are aspects of the analytic tradition that are seemingly useful, e.g. clarity. But there is no time to logic chop your way through life one problem, within a problem, about a definition of the terms with the in the problem, and on and on, at a time. The idea that philosophy 'ought' to mimic the scientific method of slow and steady 'progress' seems not only wrongheaded, but downright distracting. Philosophy may not need every 'philosopher' to expound a six-hundred page magnum opus on 'life', but the 'small-time' concerns of analytic philosophers have come off as nothing more than mere quibbling. The philosophy departments are shrinking. The interests are becoming more and more obscure. Is philosophy committing suicide on purpose or is this just an ignorant accident?

A man named Mitchell Heisman was one who acted out the all too familiar 'religious' criticisms of atheism or naturalism (which must be distinguished from one another, as naturalism is the more encompassing claim) in his orchestrated suicide in the face of Nihilism. His 'rational' exploration of the naturalistic worldview led the rotting away of all 'seriousness'. His emotions became electrons firing, his hopes and desires became survival mechanisms, his thoughts become not his thoughts, he was reduced to a flesh-creature of chance that was produced without explanation. Heisman blew his brains out all over the stairs of Harvard University library. Why is this suicide somehow 'special'? Heisman spoke of the experience of Nihilism, as fully as any other, but, regardless of his 2,000 page suicide note, he did not have a language that fully encompassed Nihilism. Heisman could not explicate the consequences of Nihilism; this is seen in Nietzsche, the 'prophet' as well with his slip into madness, due his fictitious notions of an 'overcoming' of Nihilism. In St. Seraphim's words: “It is perhaps Nietzsche, that uncanny 'prophet' who knew everything about Nihilism except its ultimate meaning...” Heisman did speak very similar, sometimes exact the same words of any saint: he spoke of denying the self, the wretchedness of human life, the contradictory nature of human emotions, the nothing of the world, the transcendental nature of human consciousness (which he found in the music of Bach) and yet these saints lived out their lives under an umbrella of a religious language (regardless of how porous the umbrella is), while Heisman was drowned in the naturalistic language of the 12st century. . Nihilism is all-powerful in its experience. Now, this is not to say that Heisman was necessarily 'wrong' in his action of suicide, that he should have been saved, or that even a Nihilistic language that I am envisioning could have stopped his suicide. The question is: is suicide the answer? Would a language that encompassed and embraced the kindred words of Heisman and the saints allow for Heisman to live as a saint? Does one even want to live as a saint, i.e. avoid suicide?

The suicide is not one to be judged in any particular manner, due to the lack of all values. There is a question of how to think about the suicide of the businessman who just lost his job or the person who was just broken up with by the 'love of their life'. Is there such a thing as an authentic suicide? Is the suicide of the one who has lost a 'worldly' distraction that they relate their 'entire' selves to the same as a Heisman who has already discovered the Nothing of the world? The person who is a slave to the world seemingly has a slight 'opening up' of Nihilism with the destruction of what they hold as meaningful, when they loss a job or a relationship, yet they seem to flee into suicide as a relief. But what about the one who has experienced Nihilism and knows that the job, the material wealth, even the 'person to person' connections are inevitably walking dead? These worldly groundings have already died for the Nihilist. Do we stop the worldly suicide and not the Nihilistic suicide? If one has not experience the death of the world, then can that person not be dragged back into the world? Conversely, if the world has died for a person, and everything within the world is insignificant, then what is there to drag such a person back to? Is the development of a Nihilistic language of transcendence even worth the effort? Is the Nihilistic suicide not the 'optimal' set of movements? Is the Nihilistic suicide authentic in the sense that it is not a 'fleeing' or escape from the world, but rather a movement that is the inevitable decision to release oneself into the Divine? The 'everyday' interpretation of suicide seems to be lacking something that the Nihilistic suicide does not. This 'something' seems to be that the common suicide is worldly and concerned with the ego, rather than the transcendent-self.

This is, obviously, not any attempt to be 'comprehensive' of suicides. The issue is way more complex than this black and white illustration. The 'jumping' suicides of 9/11 are one such example of the complexity of 'suicide'; there is a possibility that these are not even 'suicides' in any 'real' sense. With that said, there does seem to be something missing from the common suicide. This 'something' is that a particular piece of the world has died for this person, the piece of the world that they find meaningful, rather than the Nihilistic suicide who sees the entire world as insignificant. This distinction of suicides can be interpreted in a similar way via Kierkegaard-

“It is almost as though the Christian must be puffed up because of this proud elevation above everything men commonly call misfortune, above that which men commonly call the greatest evil. But then in turn Christianity has discovered an evil which man as such does not know of; this misery is the sickness unto death. What the natural man considers horrible -- when he has in this wise enumerated everything and knows nothing more he can mention, this for the Christian is like a jest. Such is the relation between the natural man and the Christian; it is like the relation between a child and a man: what the child shudders at, the man regards as nothing. The child does not know what the dreadful is; this the man knows, and he shudders at it. The child's imperfection consists, first of all, in not knowing what the dreadful is; and then again, as an implication of this, in shuddering at that which is not dreadful. And so it is also with the natural man, he is ignorant of what the dreadful truly is, yet he is not thereby exempted from shuddering; no, he shudders at that which is not the dreadful: he does not know the true God, but this is not the whole of it, he worships an idol as God.”

As Heidegger says: 'the world has sunk into insignificance.' Most want to interpret this saying of Heidegger's, among the others who pronounce similar, to exact, sentiments, that one must simply find something still within the world, in order to produce meaning. This is wrongheadedness of the worldly, 'normal' people who have yet to experience the overwhelming nature of Nihilism. The world does not simply include the 'everydayness' in which Heidegger speaks of so fluently. The 'world' is to be taken literally here, as the entire enterprise of human experiences. Hence, there is an incurable doubt and skepticism that is involved, even with the 'help' of a mystical experience, even when the mystical experience is interpreted as a transcendent experience rather than one that is reductionistic and materialistic in nature. Further, this 'skepticism' is not one of Hume where one must 'leave the study' and head back into the 'real world'. Although, as Heisman points out that he himself did, you can assume your emotions of dread and anxiety are simply illusions of a mechanistic, naturalistic production of chance. But how long does one expect to survive within the consciousness of this illusion? As Heisman points out: “the only question is whether there are any questions to take seriously at all.”

Nihilism is not concrete in a whole sense. It is of this world and yet beyond. Music, particularly Bach, as with psychedelics, can open up a feeling of transcendence. The language of Bach, in all its notes, in all its pauses and 'empty' silences, can allow one to partially 'move past' the natural. The question of 'Why?' again comes to mind. Why does this sound, this note exist? Why do these notes, strung together in this particular way, 'announce' something to me, within me and beyond me? One is welcome to the reductionist-naturalistic explanation, it is there to take. The reductionist perspective must be dealt with and even accepted; but the 'Why?' still permeates through the core of the experience within the person experiencing the language of music. The reductionist perspective on music and human emotional response to it may be correct in the sense that what is produced in the experience is very much an illusion. As with religious language needing to be taken as a symbol of the Other in order to avoid the 'boxing in' of the measureless, music with all its glory, must be taken as 'empty'. Empty in the sense of Sisyphus. The music opens up to the transcendent, but eventually will come crashing down back to the world. The Wholly-Other does not have ears. Music is a human expression of the Other; and seemingly the most substantial expression.

So, again, what is one to do?

Is suicide the answer to the human situation? Is an antinatalist position reasonable in the face of the nightmare of existence?

The lack of direction on this issue just is the issue. The Nihilistic experience is one that is not wholly negation in its nature. There is a 'positive' content within the experience of meaninglessness. This 'positive' content is one that can be described as Wholly-Other. The utter sludge that this word 'God' is covered in puts forth such a hesitation in me that it will be the last time the word is used. God is not a lawyer, God is not a judge, God is not, God is Nothing. The symbols in which one speaks of this Ultimate is one that, because of the finite/Infinite distinction, cannot ever be taken as literal.

How does one participate in the Nothingness?

The religious languages of the past are dying in the minds of some and are already dead in the minds of others. The mythical-religious language of the past, as it is used in order to transcend the human situation, is such that it is not simply pragmatic, but ingrained in the experience of being human. There is a particular type of suggestion that is being made here: the Nihilism of the world has a transcendent aspect that has yet to be put into a language in which the people that have experienced Nihilism can make sense of. For those who do not want to jump from one meaningless, finite, transitory relation to the next, a language of Nihilism must be developed.

A simple example of this is the 'scientism' of our current times. Science, regardless of its pragmatic benefits and 'knowledge', has been both warranted and unwarranted in its having been lifted up into the form of a religion. It is warranted in the emptiness of both religious language of the past and by the meaninglessness of everyday life. It is unwarranted

Heidegger is a Philosopher. Without getting into the definitions of 'religion', 'philosophy',

The words of religion do not grasp the experiences that most young people have of the world in the 21st century. What is this 'experience'? It is Nihilism; it is the meaninglessness of all finitudes. Are people conscious of this experience? Most are not. Most have been born into the scientism and relativistic ('what's good for you is good for you, and what's good for me is good for me) environment that permeates all of common culture.

The accusation of an 'optimistic' sort of tone, which is to say that a form of contradiction is present within these words, is all to obvious and to be taken without retaliation. The paradoxical nature of the Nihilistic experience is what drives the doubt, the despair, the mystery, the transcendent experience, deep to the existential core of what it means to be a human being. How does one live among the Nihilism? Is there a point to 'go further' in order to develop a language which deals with the message of Nihilism, which is similarly the symbolic language of religion? How does one face the necessary judgments that are involved within a language within a valueless world? The Absurd Perspective, or Kierkegaard's conception of 'possibilities'- An absurd aspect of human existence is that it cannot act in a judgment-free way. All human acts, regardless, of what they are can be traced back to a particular value that one finds meaningful. The problem is that the starting point for any value system is arbitrary, since any system of value will lack intrinsic worth. Therefore all judgments can be know to be unjustified, yet a human cannot escape the vicious process of consciously reacting to a knowningly unjustified system of values. Further, with all finitudes being drained empty of any meaning by the Nihilistic experience, how does one act in the Nothing of the world?

And the criticism of this being, for lack of a better word, 'elitist' sort of perspective or philosophy? This is in no way a criticism. The path is narrow.

Deeper Criticism- Why do this to yourself? Hence: “And then the real tragedy, as Andre Malraux wrote in The Human Condition: that it takes sixty years of incredible suffering and effort to make such an individual and then he is good only for dying. This painful paradox is not lost on the person himself least of all himself. He feels agonizingly unique, and yet he knows that this doesn’t make any difference as far as ultimates are concerned. He has to go the way of the grasshopper, even though it takes longer.” From Becker. Possible Response- Kierkegaard, and the others, as this being an 'objective' or 'thrown upon' oneself, it seems to be coming from 'outside' oneself, no from a subjective defect of sorts. Further response would be to speak of the 'universality' of the experience or human situation.

These criticisms are the catalyst to a conversation about the philosophy of religion, largely led by the analysis of Being that is given by Heidegger. Is a language even possible considering the 'fantastical' structure of the human situation? Pray to your gods, recite your prayers, move around in your rituals. For those of us who want more, for those of us asking 'Why?', we crave more. For those of us for which the Nothing of the world is nowhere to escape back into, suicide or a language of Being must be articulated. This purpose of this paper is develop more questions, rather than answers, in an attempt to stay on the path of a truly philosophical nature. St. John of the Cross referred to the 'abyss of faith'. This is the Infinite Conclusion that one is constantly struggling for, against the current of the naturalistic side of the divided-self.

Casualness- atheist philosopher's with their so-called problem of evil and 'religious' philosophers with their theodicies that are the equivalent to a sleep-walker with a scalpel strutting with confidence thinking they can defend their 'god', all based on their human game of morality. I just want to shake them, wake them up, make them realize as they speak from their comfortable studies, packed fridge, etc. both types of philosophers, for no real reason, thinking that their 'rational' defenses are superior to reality.

“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.” Vivekananda

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If one was invited to a tennis match, and upon showing up and walking onto the court, each with a tennis racket in hand, your partner happens to mention that there is no tennis ball- would you still participate in this game of 'tennis'? Would you 'go through the motions' of swinging mindlessly at a phantom ball that does not exist? Would you attempt to develop some sort of subjective meaning, or even outright proclaim meaning, behind this empty version of tennis match? Anyone perceiving the situation properly would have to insist on not participating in such a ridiculous situation. Nihilism takes the 'ball' away from the game of life.

Put this in the start of the 'language' section-

A main problem with discussing Nihilism is that there are no words that hold a tight enough grasp on the experience itself as to allow the experience to become transferable. One such example can be taken from St. Therese of Lisieux: “He allowed my soul to be overwhelmed with darkness, and the thought of Heaven, which had consoled me from my earliest childhood, now became a subject of conflict and torture...I wish I could express what I feel, but it is beyond me. One must have passed through this dark tunnel to understand its blackness.” Tønnessen gives a wonderful illustration of the primacy of experience:

“Another question...is the question of whether such insights can be taught...The so-called 'engaged' discourse introduced in heart-philosophy admits of a third component which we may tentatively designate the degree of integration of knowledge. An example will indicate what may be meant by the expressions “integrated” and “integration”...the Finns caught a Russian spy...He knew the outcome...When finally the death sentence is pronounced, he completely collapses. What on earth happened? He knew the outcome with absolute certainty. We should want to say the spy knows about his immanent death now, in a new and terrifying way. He has suddenly obtained an insight, a knowledge which penetrates him, goes through bones and marrow and violently shakes up the total personality structure into its deepest and darkest labyrinths. Unfortunately, this “integration” of knowledge cannot be taught in any ordinary sense of teaching.”

Is one who has experienced Nihilism, with its 'non-transferable' essence, now left to a Quietist silence? A solitary, monkish life stuck in its lack of transferability? I believe that one honest answer to this question is: yes. Then, do we stop here or is there some type of 'affirmative' substance that is found within the experience of Nihilism that allows us to move forward in a task of developing a language that breaks through what could otherwise be perceived as a simple pointing out, or culmination, of the 'world's sufferings'? To quote Cioran once more on the ' affirmative substance' of Nothing: “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.”