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## THE TWILIGHT OF THINKING

All that is not oblivion saps the substance of our being; remorse is at the opposite end of oblivion. That is why it rises threateningly like a monster of yore that bereaves you of life with its eyes or fills your moments with sensations of lead melted in blood.

Remorse is, with common people, the result of some act; they know why they feel it, since their reasons are before their eyes. In vain would one speak to them about “pangs”, they could not understand the intensity of gratuitous torment.

The metaphysical remorse is a sort of groundless restlessness, an ethical anxiety on life. You have no guilt to expiate and still you feel remorse. You cannot remember anything, but you are nevertheless assailed by the painful eternity of the past. You have not done anything wrong, yet you feel responsible for all the evil of the universe. Feeling like Satan raving about scruples. The Principle of Evil ensnared in ethical problems and in the subsequent terror of solutions.

The less indifferent to evil, the closer you get to the essential remorse. Which can sometimes be vague and equivocal and then you carry the burden of the absence of Good.

Remorse is the ethical form of regret. (Feeling sorry engenders problems, not sadness). Regret promoted to the rank of suffering.

It does not solve anything, but causes everything. The birth of morality coincides with the first stir of remorse.

A sort of painful dynamism turns it into a grand and gratuitous prodigality of the soul. Only the sea – and the cigarette smoke – could give us an image of it.

Sin is the religious expression of remorse, just like regret is its poetical one. The former marks an upper limit; the latter – a lower one.

You repent of something that has happened beneath you... You would have been free to set out in a different direction, but the attraction of evil or just of vulgarity has triumphed over the ethical reflection. The ambiguity springs out of the blend of theology and vulgarity that any remorse displays.

Nowhere is the irreversibility of time more painfully felt than in remorse. The irredeemable is but the moral interpretation of this irreversibility.

Evil discloses the demonic substance of time; good – the potential for eternity that becoming has. Evil means abandonment; good – an inspired calculation. No one can rationally tell one from the other. But we can all feel the painful warmth of evil and the ecstatic coldness of good.

Their dualism transposes in the world of values a more profound one: that between innocence and knowledge.

What distinguishes remorse from despondency, hatred or horror is a sort of tenderness, a pathos of hopelessness.

There are so many people separated from death by their mere nostalgia of it! Through this nostalgia, death turns life into a mirror in which to admire itself. Poetry is but the tool of a funereal narcissism.

Animals and plants can be sad too, but they have not, as yet, discovered sadness as a means of knowing. It ceases to be nature only to the extent to which man uses it. Looking around who would not notice that we have given our friendship to plants, animals and so many minerals! – but never to another man.

The world is but a universal Nowhere. That is why you never have any place to go...

All those moments when life goes silent so that you can hear your loneliness... In Paris, just as in some faraway hamlet, time withdraws and coils up in some corner of your conscience, and you are left with yourself, with you lights and your shadows. Your soul has broken loose and, through indefinite convulsions, surfaces, like a corpse fished out of the depths. And then you realise that there is another meaning of losing one's soul than the biblical one.

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All thoughts seem moans of an earthworm trodden on by angels.

You cannot understand what “meditation” means unless you are used to listening to the silence. Its voice is an urge to surrender. All the religious processes of initiation are immersions in its depths. I had a glimpse of that in Buddha's mystery the moment I was stopped by the fear of silence. The cosmic muteness tells you so many things that cowardice pushes you in the arms of this world.

Religion is a softened revelation of silence, an alleviation of the lesson in nihilism taught by its whispers, filtered by our fear and prudence... This is how silence gets to lie at the opposite end of life.

Whenever I remember the word wandering I have the revelation of man's nature. And all those times I feel as if mountains had just fallen asleep on my forehead...

In his autobiography, Suso tells us that he had engraved Jesus' name with a metal scribe on his chest next to his heart. His blood seems not to have been shed in vain, for after a while he discovered a light in those letters, which he covered lest anyone should see them. – What would I write on my heart? – Quite possibly the word would be: misery. And Suso's surprise would be reiterated several centuries later, should the devil have light enough at least for his own emblem... Thus, the human heart would turn into Satan's luminous sign.

It takes the mind of a Greek sceptic and the heart of a Job to be able to experience feelings in themselves: a guiltless sin, a groundless sadness, a causeless remorse or an objectless hatred...

Pure feelings – those which have their equivalent in topic-free philosophising. Thus, neither life nor thinking can have any connection with time anymore, and existence is defined as a suspension. Nothing of what is going on inside you can relate to anything anymore, since there is no destination, but mere waste in the internal finality of each act. The more you rob your "history" of its temporality, the more essential you become. Heavenward gazes are never dated and life itself is more difficult to locate than nothingness.

The purity of vagueness that indwells the longing for the absolute should cure us of all temporal infections and should serve us as a prototype of ceaseless suspension. For ultimately this is but disinfecting conscience of its time awareness.

Whenever I think of man, pity floods my thoughts. And that is why I constantly fail to find him. A piece of broken nature forces you into broken meditations.

The passion for holiness replaces alcohol just as efficiently as music does. Similarly act eroticism and poetry. Different forms of oblivion, perfectly replaceable one with the other. Drunkards, saints, lovers and poets are all initially at the same distance from heaven, or rather from earth. Only the ways are different, although they are all on the way of not being human anymore. – This explains why a sort of voluptuousness of immanence condemns them equally.

Timidity is an instinctive contempt for life; cynicism – a rational one. What would tenderness be then? A delicate dusk of lucidity, a “demotion” of the spirit to the level of the heart.

Any kind of timidity has a religious nuance. The fear that we belong to nobody, that God is a nobody and the world his work... Metaphysical doubt triggers in all of us a sort of uneasiness of being and discomfort in society. Lack of audacity among people – or strength decanted to contempt – springs out of a vitality uncertain – and doubtful too – of the most important things in the world. A resolute instinct and firm beliefs give you the right – force you even – to be impudent. – Timidity is a way of concealing regrets. For any boldness is but the expression of a lack of regrets.

Whenever you find yourself void of illusions, you feel as if you had acted as mirror for life’s intimate toilette. – No mystery is more moving than the love for life; it is the only one able to disregard all evidence. You would have to be beyond the world to be able to see life as absolute. This is how a celestial perspective projects it.

Where the paradox arises, any system dies and life triumphs. It is with the help of the paradox that rationality saves its face in front of the irrational. There are only two ways in which life’s confusion can be expressed: the curse and the hymn. For those who cannot handle them there is a narrow escape left: the paradox – formal smile of irrationality.

For what is the paradox – from the viewpoint of logic – if not an irresponsible game, and from that of common sense – a theoretical immorality? Is it not in the paradox that all dilemmas, nonsense and conflicts that undermine life burn? Whenever life’s unquiet shadows confess to reason, the latter wraps their whispers in the elegance of some paradox in order to conceal their origin. Even the salon-related one, is it anything else than the profoundest expression superficiality can put on?

The paradox is not a solution; for it does not solve anything. Its only use is to adorn the irreparable. Trying to straighten something out with it is the greatest paradox. I cannot imagine it in the absence of the disappointment of reason. The latter’s lack of pathos forces it to eavesdrop on life’s droning and renounce autonomy in understanding it. In a paradox, reason annihilates itself; it has opened its borders and can no longer check the overflow of exciting and of throbbing errors.

Theologians are parasites of the paradox. Had they not used it unconsciously, they should have long surrendered. Religious scepticism is but its conscious practice.

All that reason cannot accommodate is cause for doubt; but there is nothing in it anyway. Hence the thriving development of paradoxical thinking, which has filled forms with content and officially acknowledged the absurd.

The paradox lends life the charm of expressive absurdity. It thus returns what life has given it in the first place.

All that is religious is a matter of intensity and not of content. God is defined as an instance of our fever, and if the world we live in becomes so rare an objective of religious sensitivity, this is precisely because we can conceive of it only at neutral moments. Without “fevers” we cannot go beyond the field of perception, that is we do not see anything. It is only when they do not distinguish any objects that the eyes serve God; the absolute is afraid of individualisation.

Intensification – of whatever sensation – is a sign of religiosity. Ultimate disgust reveals Evil (the negative way towards God). Vice is closer to the absolute than some genuine instinct, because participation in the divine is possible only to the extent to which we depart from nature.

A lucid man gauges his “fevers” at every step he takes; he is a spectator of his own passion, forever tailing himself and equivocally giving in to the figments of his sadness. In full lucidity, knowledge is homage to physiology.

The more we know about ourselves, the more we fulfil the requirements of some kind of hygiene, which consists in achieving organic transparency. So much purity makes us see through ourselves. Thus you get to witness yourself.

The only possible source of the holy hysteria to be found in monasteries is listening to silence and contemplation of the silence performance of loneliness. – Then what about the inner fret of Time, the loss of consciousness on the ridges of the temporal waves? Source of lay hysteria...

If we are to accept something infinitesimally real in the universe, then everything is real; if something does not exist, nothing exists. To concede to multiplicity and reduce everything to a hierarchy of appearances means to lack the courage of negation. The theoretical distance from life and our soft spot for it lead us to the demurring solution of the degrees of unreality, to being both for and against nature.

A paradoxical situation is expressive of some essential indeterminacy of the being. Things that have not settled yet. Both as a real instance and as a theoretical form, the paradox springs out of a state of incompleteness. One paradox would be enough to blow up heaven.

Contingency – oases of arbitrariness in the desert of Necessity – could not be perceived by any form of reason if it weren't for the additional mobility brought about by the restlessness of the paradox. For what is the paradox, if not an eruption of demonism into reason, a transfusion of blood into Logic and a sufferance of forms?

After midnight, you think as if no longer alive or – in the best of cases – as if no longer yourself. You turn into a mere tool of silence, of eternity or of the void. You think yourself sad and are unaware that they all breathe through you. You must be the victim of some obscure forces, for there's no sadness an individual can breed that cannot be contained in him. All that outgrows us originates outside us. Both pleasure and sufferance. Mystics have associated the overflow of ecstatic delight with God, because they would not accept the idea that a limited individual could ever be able of such fulfilment. It is the same with sadness and with everything else. You may be alone, but with loneliness in its entirety.

Whenever I walk in the fog, I disclose myself to myself more easily. The sun is an estranger, since by shedding light on your world, it also ties you to its deceit. But fog is the colour of bitterness...

The outflows of pity are usually preceded by a state of general weakness, when you walk in fear of falling into the objects surrounding you, of melting into them. Pity is the pathological form of the intuitive knowledge. Nevertheless, it cannot be classified along with other illnesses, as it is a...vertical fainting. You fall in the direction of your own loneliness.

White nights – the only really black ones – turn you into a real Time diver. You keep going deeper and deeper towards its bottomlessness... The musical and indefinite diving to the roots of temporality is to be forever an unfulfilled ecstasy, because time's boundaries cannot be reached unless one jumps out of it. This very jump, however, turns time exterior to us; we do perceive its boundaries, but not by experiencing it. Suspension transforms it into unreality and deprives it of its power to suggest eternity – mere setting of white nights.

Sleep's only aim is the oblivion of time, of the demonic principle governing it.

Philosophy's mediocrity is explained through the fact that thinking is possible only at low temperatures. When you can master your fever, you sort your thoughts like puppets; you pull ideas by their strings and the audience indulge in the illusion. But when any self-ward look is a fire or a shipwreck, and when your whole inner landscape is but a whirlwind of tempestuous fire on the sea horizon, then you let go of your thoughts, these columns intoxicated by the seizure of the interior combustion.

Was I to find out that I have – just once – been sad because of men, shame would make me lay down my arms. Men may be sometimes loved or hated and always pitied, but the amount of attention required by sadness is too degrading a compromise. The moments of divine generosity when we would embrace them all are but rare inspiration, real moments of "grace".

The love for people is a disease at the same time tonic and weird, devoid as it is of any real support. There has never been – nor will there ever be – such a thing as a psychologist in love with his fellows. Knowledge is not humanity oriented. – There are, however, blanks of lucidity, pauses in knowing, crises of his merciless eye, which do put him in the strange situation of loving. He would then want to lie down in the middle of the street, kiss the mortals' soles, unlace the shoes of merchants and beggars, crawl through all the wounds and all the bleedings, hang dove wings on the criminal's look and be the last of men out of love!

For what it's worth, contempt and knowledge of people turn the psychologist into a victim of his own corpses. Because for him any love is expiation. – Those people whom knowledge has annihilated are bound to die within you; the victims of your contempt rot in your heart. And this entire cemetery coming back to life in the frenzy of love, in the spasms of your expiation!

The sublime is vastness seen as an intimation of death. The sea, renunciation, the mountains and the organ, they are all in different – if similar – ways the crowning of an end whose destruction, although time dependent, lies ultimately beyond it. For the sublime is a temporal crisis of eternity.

What is sublime in Jesus' example comes from eternity's wanderings through time, from its abysmal degradation. But all that is purpose in the Saviour's existence weakens the idea of sublime, which is free of any ethical hints. If it was willingly that he descended in order to save us, then we can take interest in him only to the extent to which we enjoy aesthetically an ethical gesture. On the contrary, if his having been with us is but a mistake of eternity, an unconscious temptation into death of perfection, an expiation in time of the absolute, then don't these huge proportions of uselessness rise under the sign of the sublime? May aesthetics still save the cross, as symbol of eternity.

No pleasure is greater than thinking you used to be a philosopher – and you are no longer one.

To suffer means to meditate on a feeling of pain: to philosophise – to meditate on this very meditation.

Suffering is the ruin of a concept; an avalanche of sensations that deters any kind of form.

Everything in philosophy is of a second or a third rank. Nothing is direct in philosophy. Any system is built on digressions, it being itself the digression par excellence. And the philosopher is nothing but an indirect genius.

We cannot be all that generous with ourselves as not to be stingy with the freedom we indulge in. If we did not refrain, countless would be the

times when the moment would be nothing but a piece of survival! Does it not happen very often that we stay what we are by the mere idea of our own limits? A poor memory of a past individualisation, a rag of our own individuality... As if we were an object looking for a name in an identity-less nature. – Man – like any other creature – is made according to certain sensations. Only that it happens that they should not make room for one another in the usual sequence and should rush all together in a primordial fury, swarming around the wreck – because of plenitude – the self is. Where, then, can there be room for the patch of void which conscience is?

Much as may be the bitterness we host, it is never enough to spare us that of others. That is why reading the French moralists is a comfort in the late hours of the night. They have always known what it means to be alone among people; but only rarely what loneliness is in the world. Pascal himself could not ultimately defeat his condition of man withdrawn from society. Had he suffered just a bit less, the only thing left for us would have been an outstanding intelligence. – Between God and the French has always stood the salon.

The less you are interested in people, the shier you grow with them, and when you have come to despise them, you start stammering. – Nature never pardons you any trespassing on her recklessness and follows all the paths of your vanity, filling them with regrets. How else can one explain the fact that to any triumph ranking above the human condition is attached a corresponding adequate regret?

Shyness lends to the human being some of the intimate discretion of plants, and to a restless spirit on its own account a resigned melancholy that seems to be that of the vegetal world. I can be jealous of a lily only when I am not shy.

If suffering were not a knowledge tool, committing suicide would be compulsory. And life itself – with its heart-rending futility, its obscure bestiality, which drags us in errors to occasionally hang us of some truth –, who could bear it if it were not a unique spectacle of knowledge? Living the dangers of the spirit, we find in intensities the comfort for the absence of an ultimate truth.

Any error is a former truth. There is not however an initial one, since the distance between truth and error only marked by the pulsation, by the inner animation, by a secret rhythm. Thus, any error is a soul-less truth, one that is worn out and awaits resuscitation.

It is psychologically, and not formally, that truths die; they preserve their validity, perpetuating the non-life of forms, notwithstanding the fact that they may no longer be valid for anybody.



All the life they have is spent in time; the formal eternity places them in a void of categories.

How long can truth "hold" for a man? Not longer than a pair of shoes. Only beggars never change them. But since you are abreast of life, you have to continually renew yourself, for the fullness of one's existence is measured according to the sum of errors stored, according to the amount of ex-truths.

Nothing of what we know can escape expiation. Sooner or later, we pay dearly any paradox, any bravery of thought or indiscretion of spirit. This punishment consequent to any progress of knowledge is of a strange charm. Have you shredded any veil covering the recklessness of nature? You shall pay for it in a sadness whose source you will never suspect. Has any rebellious and threatening thought crossed your mind? There are nights that can only be filled with the evolutions of remorse. Have you asked God too many questions? Then why are you amazed at the burden of the answers you have never received?!

Indirectly, through its consequences, knowledge is a religious act.

It is with voluptuousness and with all the possible abandonment to the inevitable that we expiate our spirit. Since disintoxication of knowledge is impossible, for the organism is addicted to it and incapable of getting used to smaller doses, – let us turn the reflex act into a reflection. In this way, the infinite thirst of the spirit finds an adequate expiation.

Chastity is a refusal of knowledge. Ascetics could have satisfied their longing for desolation more easily next to a woman, if the fear of "temptation" had not deprived them of the mysterious depth of sexuality. The panic arisen in a world of objects stirs a deadly longing for the woman, herself an object, enlivened by the passions of our boredom.

A being on its way to a complete spiritualisation is not capable of melancholy anymore, for it can no longer indulge into whimsical oscillations. Spirit means resistance, whereas melancholy supposes, more than anything, non-resistance to the soul, to the primordial turmoil of sensitivity, to the uncontrollability of feelings. The primary zone of the soul consists of everything that is uncontrollable and unquiet in us, of the irrational made up of dreams and bestiality, organic deficiencies and tormented urges, as well as of musical outbursts that defile the purity of angels and make us look down on lilies. It is here, in the poetry of these weaknesses, that melancholy is at ease.

When you think yourself farthest away from the world, melancholic breezes reveal the illusion of your closeness to the spirit. The vital forces of the soul tempt you downwards, force you to dive into the primordial depth, to acknowledge your sources, from which the abstract void of the spirit and its implacable serenity isolate you.

Melancholy is a form of separation from the world by means of life and not of the spirit; the immanent deserted by the tissues. Through their incessant appeal to the spirit, men have attached to it a pensive nuance that we cannot find in women who, unable to ever resist their soul, confine themselves to an immediate melancholy.

The need for a pure kind of time, purged of all becoming, and which is not eternity... An ethereal thinning of the "passage", an expansion of temporality in itself, a time without "flowing"... Delicate ecstasy of mobility, temporal plenitude free of moments... To dive in a time without dimensions and of so airy a texture that our heart can bring it back, unstained by the irreversible and untouched by the irrevocable...

...I am beginning to understand how it stole its way into Paradise.

He who does not have an organ for eternity conceives of it as yet another form of temporality, and thus he creates the image of a time flowing outside itself or of a vertical time. The temporal icon of eternity would then be an upward flowing, a vertical accumulation of moments that arrest the dynamic gliding, the horizontal movement towards death.

The suspension of time introduces a vertical dimension, but only for as long as the act of this suspension lasts. Once ended, eternity denies the time, constituting an irreducible order. The change of natural direction, the aggression against temporality on the way to eternity shows the extent to which any defeat of life involves a violation of time too. The vertical dimension of suspension is a perversion of the sense of temporality, for eternity would not be accessible without the former's depravation and corruption.

Sickness stands for the triumph of the personal principle, the victory against our anonymous substance. That is why it is the most characteristic phenomenon of individuation. Health – even in the transfigured form of naiveté – expresses participation into anonymity, into the biologic paradise of indivisibility, while sickness is the direct source of separateness. It changes the condition of an individual, its plus triggers uniqueness and a leap beyond the natural. The difference between a sick man and a healthy one is greater than that between the latter and some animal. For to be sick means to be something else than what you are, to submit to the determinations of the possible, to identify the moment with the surprise. Normally our fate seems to be at our disposal; we foresee our every moment and we live in a certainty full of indifference. We are free to believe that on a certain day, at a certain time, we will be able to be serious, or joyful, and nothing prevents us from counting on the interest that we will show to different things. – The situation is different with the awareness arisen by sickness. There is no trace of freedom; we cannot foresee anything, mere slaves of the organic moods and whims. Fatality breathes through every pore, ugliness is released by the limbs, and they all build up this apotheosis of necessity which is the sickness.

Once prey to the hysteric climate of uncertainties, you never know what you are going to do, what is going to happen, what disasters lurk in your inner darkness, nor to what extent you will love or hate. Sickness, which separates us from nature, eventually fastens us to it more tightly than a tombstone. The nuances of the sky force us into similar changes in our soul, the different degrees of humidity into corresponding moods, and the seasons into an accursed periodicity. Thus, we translate morally the entire nature. At an infinite distance from it we decipher all its fantasies, the obvious or implicit chaos and the curves of matter in the oscillations of an uncertain heart. To know that you have no connection whatsoever with the world and to nevertheless register all its variations – this is the paradox of sickness –, the strange necessity enforced upon us, the freedom to think beyond the being and the condition of beggars of our own body. For indeed, do we not hold out our hand towards ourselves, do we not ask for our support, tramps at the gates of our own self, in abandonment of a life without cure? The need to do something for yourself and the incapacity to rise above a pedagogy of the incurable!

If we were free in our sicknesses, doctors would become beggars, for mortals are attracted towards suffering, but not towards its tormenting blend of desperate subjectivity and invincible necessity.

Sickness is death's way of loving life, and man is the stage on which this weakness is played out. In any pain, the absolute of death enjoys the becoming, our torture being but the temptation, the voluntary degradation of Darkness. And thus suffering is nothing but a "minus of absolute" of death.

Any intensity turns you into an object, not back into a person. The consequences of the excursions near the Absolute are more serious than any intoxication. A hangover appears as mild and pleasant when compared to the stiffness subsequent to acting out weaknesses for God. The ultimate access can only make you feel the horror of no longer understanding anything and it is only after ecstasy that you can rejoin the matter. Who would have the courage of defining those moments when the saints look up to the idiots?

The theological preoccupations have hindered man's self-knowledge. He has projected onto God everything that he is not, and it is not very difficult to imagine what sinister decay he would have reached had he directed his interest and curiosity towards himself from the very beginning. The antipode of the divine attributes reduces men to worm dimensions. For indeed, what have we achieved with psychology and self-knowledge? Transformation into worms, worms that are no longer allowed to prowl after other corpses...

Stupidity is a painless suffering of the intelligence. It belongs to nature and is thus devoid of history. Not even pathology can encompass the stupid, for they have eternity on their side.

The “sparkles” of an idiot would provide the most credible image of the world – supposing that he could overcome the sensation of blood rotting and occasionally be aware of the infinitesimal stream of his intelligence.

If you have never helped anyone to end his life, you have known neither the chains of being nor the painfully rare experience of somebody thanking you for having supported him into death, for having strengthened his end and the thought of his end, for having spared him the triviality of encouragement and hope.

We can hardly imagine how many are those expecting us to deliver them from happiness...

The two types of philosophers: those who think about ideas and those who think about themselves. The difference between syllogism and unhappiness...

For an objective philosopher, only ideas have a biography; for a subjective one, only autobiographies have ideas. You are foredoomed to live either in the neighbourhood of categories or that of yourself. In the latter case, philosophy is the poetic meditation of unhappiness.

The delicacies of anaemia make us permeable to another world, and in its sadness we fall perpendicularly onto the sky.

Everything that is not health – from idiocy to geniality – is a state of horror.

Being time sensitive is a diffused form of fear.

And since I cannot keep up the pace with life, its waters, either withdrawing or overwhelming me, cast me to a shore where everything is in the past.

The pleasure of withdrawing from your nature, from your inner muddle, and of bypassing the being into the vanity of a bottomless whirl... He who does not float above emptiness in the hope of some revenge, he who cannot taste in the void the seduction of some future plenitude – that person does not know how to positively consume himself and how to usefully spend the extra-uselessness of vitality.

Psychologists, who devote themselves to others because they do not have enough soul, derive the inclination towards the unreal from our shortcomings only. They are not aware of the way in which absence can come out of a feeling of barbarity. Or of the way in which anaemia and barbarity blend

in life's display of unreality. For indeed, why would one tell them about a rhythm-less type of blood, fitted into our veins as a remembrance of a wave-less and of a wave-full sea?

I have never found life worth living. At times it is worth too much, at others – too little. In both cases it is unbearable. Suicide out of love for life is by no means less justified than the official and common one. If anything, it is more natural... Heaven is a state of on-going suicide, just like hell. Between them stretches the state of non-suicide known as to be.

The thought that life might be something else than a demonic sprouting, that it might lead somewhere, to some goal exterior to its useless unfolding – seems so oppressing and unreasonable that its becoming true would lethally hurt me. The endless list of everything you have not done and all the laziness justified by cynicism would then rush onto your petrified horror. – We can only be failures if life has a sense. For it is only in this case that everything I have not achieved can become a fall or a sin. In a world with a purpose exterior to it, in a world aiming at something, we are compelled to be to our outmost limits.

If there were any mortal to convince me of the presence of some absolute sense, to prove to me the existence of some ethics immanent to becoming – remorse and despair would make me lose my mind. When you have wasted your life finding comfort in the useless passing and in the deceptions of becoming, when you have passionately suffered in of appearances – then the Absolute makes you sick. Admittedly! Life cannot possibly have a sense. Or if it has, it will have to conceal it if it still wants to have us.

He who loves freedom, no matter how little, cannot willingly settle down for a sense. Be it the sense of the world.

Any kind of lucidity is the awareness of a loss.

Our way of looking at things is so much dependent on exterior circumstances that we could write the geography of every thought. We would begin with the colour of the sky and we would end with the position of the chair. The outskirts of thinking have their own justifications.

When you have ruthlessly dived to the bottoms of the being and have plundered them of their richness with your subterranean glances, you suddenly find yourself, proud and presumptuous, in the arms of nothingness. What is it then that makes you abruptly stop in the middle of this metaphysical orgy (...)? Is it the hidden resistance of the blood, the passions rushing over the knowledge or the instincts besieging the spirit? There is something in us that rejects nothingness, when the mind shows us that everything is nothingness. Could that something be everything? It might well be the case, since we live through it.

The saints, the fools and the suicides seem to have defeated this something, the essential and hidden indefiniteness that arrests the spirit in its ultimate pride. We the others, losers of the absolute, – we are being stalked by life, just when we think we are the farthest possible from it. And if it does cross our path after we have forgotten all about it, we can infer from its whispers that the absolute is but Nothingness as the ultimate stage of knowledge. And then we back out... To the spirit, life is nothing but withdrawal.

As the nostalgia for the infinite is too vague, it takes the form and the contour of the longing for death. We look for precision even in the dreamy idleness or the poetic swoon. Anyway, death does put a certain order in the infinite. For is death not its only direction?

There is only one argument against suicide: it is not natural to put an end to your days before proving to yourself how far you can go, how much you can achieve! Although suicides believe in their precocity, they do however perform the act before having reached full maturity, before being ripe for a wilful disappearance. That a man should want to end his life is not difficult to understand. But why would he not choose his climax, the most auspicious moment of his growth to do it? Committing suicide is horrible precisely because it does not happen at the right time, because it interrupts, rather than crowns a destiny. An ending needs gardening. For the ancients, suicide used to be a kind of pedagogy; the end germinated and grew inside them. And when they wilfully perished, death was an ending without dusk.

The moderns lack the inner culture of suicide, the aesthetics of the ending. Nobody dies as they should and all end at random: un-initiated into suicide, poor wretches of death. If they could put an end to themselves in time we would not feel pity when hearing of all those “acts of despair” and would not call “miserable” those who consecrate their own fulfilment. Nowhere appears the moderns’ lack of axis more striking as in the inner estrangement from the carefully planned suicide, from the suicide seen as horror of failure, stupidity and old age, from the suicide seen as a homage to force, thriving and heroism.

Whenever I am not tempted by feelings of ecstasy I feel an object. It feels as if light froze on the brains...and time collapsed in a dead heart.

I watch the stones and envy their throbbing. Will they ever understand that I lend myself to their rest? And the rocks, will they want to drown in the silence of the blood?

Whenever I strum my ribs as if a mandolin, the feeling of death gets the shape of immortality.

And when nothingness tells me everything, the senses are stirred in an empty soul. And then the nothingness of the woman outlives the nothingness of the world.

The fewer arguments you find in favour of living, the more you are connected to it. For the love we feel for it can only make sense through the tension of the absurd.

Since it has everything by its side, death has ceased to be convincing. The support given by reason has proved fatal.

The shortage of arguments has saved life. How can you be indifferent before such poverty?

Laziness is a form of scepticism of the flesh.

The need to prove a statement, to be constantly hunting for arguments implies spiritual anaemia and uncertainty both of the intelligence and of the person in general. When some thought powerfully and violently overwhelms you, it comes out of the substance of your existence; trying to defeat and surround it in arguments means weakening it and doubting yourself. A poet or a prophet will never demonstrate because the thought is their very being; their idea is not different from their existence. The method and the system are the death of the mind. Even God thinks in fragments; in absolute fragments.

Whenever you try to prove something you place yourself without thinking, next to it and not above it. Philosophers live in parallel with their ideas; they follow them patiently and obediently and although they may intersect them sometimes, they are never within them.

How can you speak of pain, immortality, heaven and desert without actually being pain, immortality, heaven and desert?

A thinker must necessarily be everything he says. This is the lesson taught by poets and by the ecstasies and pains you go through when living.

The inner void is like a soundless music, a mute song. Its non-sonorous billowing is mysteriously interposed between us and the world, and separates us from life in the middle of living and from death in the middle of dying. Towards what kind of ailing ascension is the spirit of being heading? Why is every closeness painful while our breathing is enlivened by all that is remote?

Where are the cruel arms of a woman that should tightly embrace your bones quivering with thinking, and you should lower your ear on the beats of her intoxicated heart, still ridden by your precious and voluptuously unconsolated horror?!

A thinker is no more entitled to self-contradiction than life is.

*English version by Dana CRĂCIUN*

*EMIL CIORAN* was born in 1911 in Rășinari, near Sibiu. He studied Philosophy and Letters in Bucharest (1928-1932), and graduated with a thesis on Henri Bergson. In 1933-1935 he was awarded a scholarship in Germany, and then returned in Romania as a professor of philosophy in Brașov. In 1937 he was the recipient of a doctoral grant of the French government, and finally settled in Paris. In 1947 Cioran began to write in French. Before he became established in French culture, he published five books in Romania: *On the Heights of Despair* (1934), *The Book of Delusions* (1936), *The Transfiguration of Romania* (1936), *Tears and Saints* (1937), *The Twilight of Thinking* (1940). In France he published a dozen books with Gallimard. His debut volume, *Précis de décomposition (A Short History of Decay)*, 1949) was awarded the Rivarol prize. His other books include: *The Temptation to Exist* (1956), *The Trouble with Being Born* (1973), *Exercises of Admiration* (1985). He died in 1995 in Paris.

*The Twilight of Thinking*, the book from which our selection is made, is both a conclusive work of his Romanian period and an opening to the area of inquiries, closures and disclosures that will constitute the specific territory of his work in French. All the marks of the reflective Cioran are exhibited here: the stylish and vitalist polishing of pessimism applied onto language, the spiritual exasperation of an individual, irreducible, religious feeling confronting the strained, encoded Church experience of the sacred, as well as the myth of the cultural salvation or soteriology intertwined with the need of flaying all the idols alive.