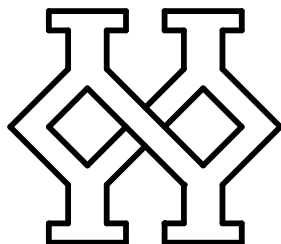


Łukasz Dębowski

**Philosophical Trips**  
**1992–1999**

Translated by ChatGPT 4o;  
puns corrected by the author



Original title: Wycieczki filozoficzne 1992–1999

Copyright © Łukasz Dębowski, 2025

All rights reserved

# Contents

<b>Caveat Emptor</b> . . . . .	7
--------------------------------	---

## Continuous

<b>Utterance</b> . . . . .	11
<b>Human Animal</b> . . . . .	41
<b>The Canon of Restatement</b> . . . . .	47
<b>The Canon of Burning</b> . . . . .	63
<b>Verzuiling and Apartheid</b> . . . . .	65
<b>Four Knowledges</b> . . . . .	71
<b>Fairly Good Washing of Conscience</b> . . . . .	81
<b>The Book of Thing and Thoughtfulness</b> . . . . .	85
<b>Old Age</b> . . . . .	91
<b>Exchange Trees: The Myth Irreproducible Yet Irreducible</b> . .	95
<b>The Birth of Time: The Myth of Technocrats</b> . . . . .	97
<b>The Creation of the World: The Myth of Atheists</b> . . . . .	99
<b>The Set of Sets: The Myth of Pantheists</b> . . . . .	101

## Discontinuous

<b>The Red Covers Reformed</b> . . . . .	105
--	-----

Never . . . . .	105
An Attempt at Concise Synthesis . . . . .	105
Names . . . . .	106
What Does There Exist . . . . .	106
Spaghetti . . . . .	106
Mananga . . . . .	107
Concert of Pessimism . . . . .	107
The Mirror of Dark Humor . . . . .	108
Culture and the Grass Issue . . . . .	109
The Grand Finale . . . . .	111
The Latch . . . . .	111
We Have and We Are . . . . .	111
I Shall Not Return Again . . . . .	112
In the Year Two Thousand . . . . .	113
Cast Them Down . . . . .	114
Bubbles . . . . .	115
Bubbles II . . . . .	115
The Game . . . . .	116
The Eclecticism of the Department Store . . . . .	119
Concert for Teeth and Tongue . . . . .	120
Language Culture . . . . .	121
I'm Scared . . . . .	121
Don't Look Behind . . . . .	121
Polite Macabre . . . . .	124
Worry . . . . .	124
<b>Six Little Pines . . . . .</b>	<b>125</b>
Reality . . . . .	125
Nature and Ethics . . . . .	126
My Master . . . . .	128
Thinking Thoughtlessly . . . . .	130
How Funny Are Those Who Seek to Grasp the World . . . . .	131
O, Great Hypocrisy . . . . .	131

Six Little Pines . . . . .	133
Five Colors . . . . .	133
Ideal . . . . .	134
<b>Saurophages</b> . . . . .	137
Read . . . . .	137
Dachshund . . . . .	139
I'm Just Experiencing Here . . . . .	140
Salutation . . . . .	140
In Memory of Poor Children . . . . .	141
Contradiction . . . . .	142
Dictionaries . . . . .	143
Inventory . . . . .	143
Enlightened Subjectivism . . . . .	144
Eyes . . . . .	145
Saurophages . . . . .	146
Hypothesis . . . . .	148
It Is My Life . . . . .	148
<b>The Fourth Set</b> . . . . .	151
Eigenvalues . . . . .	151
The Talk . . . . .	152
Three Hippos . . . . .	152
Eight Sentences . . . . .	153
Litany of Rest . . . . .	153
<b>Haiku</b> . . . . .	155



# Caveat Emptor

One of the imperatives of youth is the desire to understand everything—a need for what is technically referred to as cognitive closure. For me, this need was particularly intense. As a child and later as a teenager, I was fascinated, in turn, by almost every major field of science—biology, geography, chemistry, physics, linguistics, religious studies, mathematics—though perhaps not the mindless memorization of historical dates. My insatiable urge to read encyclopedias, atlases, dictionaries, popular science books, and occasionally academic textbooks grew from a genuine, albeit perhaps somewhat naive, conviction that science was the key to, well, any (!) imaginable power. Let's be honest: there was also an element of solitary hedonism in this pursuit, as learning always strongly stimulated my dopaminergic system. No wonder, then, that I eventually burned out, culminating in a manic psychosis in which I became Buddha and ended up in a psychiatric hospital. Later, I gradually learned to ration these dangerous pleasures, but that's a topic for another book...

This book contains my youthful, pseudo-philosophical attempts to transcend the barriers of language and understanding. I had little knowledge of proper philosophy (and still don't), but at some point, I discovered that writing in this

style came easily to me and provided yet another source of cognitive pleasure. To be frank, though, my texts are exceptionally sparse in factual content and might serve primarily as a form of hollow intellectual entertainment. For me, they also led to a serious case of obsessive-compulsive disorder when, during a period of deep depression, I tried to pull myself out by recollecting the best bits of what I had once written here—which, worse still, stuck with me for several years.

The reader might suspect that I am, in fact, advertising this book in reverse... Fair enough. But even so, let the buyer beware!

*Łódź, January 2021*



**Continuous**



# Utterance

## 1.

For as long as I can remember, there has always come a moment, now and then, when it feels like I need to express myself. To utter this. Is this it? I don't know. Is it important? I don't know. What is it? I don't know. What will come of it? I don't know. It doesn't matter. I speak. And that's it. Before. Now. Later.

I could say that I don't know anyone except myself. This would be neither a lie nor the truth, and also neither one nor the other. It would be an utterance like any other, not the world. A part, not the whole.

The world fascinates me with its elusive and fleeting solidity of existence. The world exists despite all conflicts and contradictions. Certainty and uncertainty of views are powerless to shake the very existence of the world as it reveals itself to me. The world has no doubts as it comes into being. Would I want to be like it? Deep down, I already am, and wanting or not wanting has nothing to do with it. I come into being, even if I may not know how I come into being. Like the world. What's the point of consciousness? It has no bearing on mere existence. It is an inseparable part of it.

## 2.

Once, I wanted to speak impersonally and seriously, thinking that by doing so, I would fulfill my goals more properly. I thought that by being more objective and precise, I would better steer the world, or myself. However, seriousness often becomes laughable when viewed from another perspective. Impersonality takes on a bias. Goals lose their strength. The pursuit of more proper behavior seems unhealthy. Objectivity becomes superstition. Precision turns out to be a convention. Steering the world is pure madness, and one's self-image can be very fluid. You cannot look at yourself with distance if you are constantly observing yourself from afar.

What I'm saying doesn't mean that I disapprove of impersonal and serious expressions, proper goal fulfillment, objectivity, precision, directing the world, imagining oneself, or distancing oneself. Quite the opposite. Contrary to popular belief, idiocy and lack of external meaning do not negate our actions. Here and now, things happen. Consistently, one after the other, or maybe not. There's no such thing that doesn't lead to something. Look. Feel the moment. Surrender to it, for you have nothing better to do. Then let it pass and let the next one come. Do what you will. You will do nothing else. Conventions and rebellions. Simply that. Ineffable, yet so very existent. Lean on them as always and leave your residue and judgment upon them. And what about after? Well, laughter is good for your health, and tears might help with something too. And if they harm, then really, what of it?

I couldn't sleep tonight, or maybe I woke up. I don't know who I was. I don't know who I am. I don't know who I will be. It matters. It doesn't matter. I felt the will to speak. Much of it is no longer here and now, and much of it is not yet. Now it

seems to me that the best thing for this event is for me to be very personal, sometimes not serious. I'm not thinking about the goal or the properties. The only acceptable position for me will be enlightened and a bit insane subjectivism. Instead of clinging, I'll loosen the ties and maybe surrender to the world, maybe to myself. I don't know. It will be. It is. It was.

This is also a convention. Artificial? As if anything could not be natural! Sometimes it's a pity that nothing is artificial, because it's such a good argument against what one doesn't like at the given moment and place. The fact of the lack of genuine artificiality can be skillfully hidden. Fortunately, or for something else.

### 3.

How amusing a creature is man. How amusingly he creates authorities in his own image. He plays with them like dolls, and above all, with the greatest delight, he gives them reverence. This reverence is taken as due to himself. Undoubtedly, man deserves respect, after all, he was able to choose the right authority. Authorities can also be ostentatiously trampled upon. And we're good at that. It's nice to play with people in the guise of people. It's so vain, so innocent, and, really, there's nothing better to do. Playing at seriousness, that's it! One should not underestimate human nature. It's stronger than human imaginations about it.

One should laugh at man, even at himself, but quietly. Under no circumstances should one openly mistreat people and take away their respect. A person is touchy, petty, and dangerous. He knows how to harm himself and others. It's so vain, so innocent. Our favorite game is sanctimonious hypocrisy. Who

among us doesn't like it and who doesn't fight it in others! Let's keep doing it. It's really very consistent.

When I was small, I didn't know when people were speaking seriously, when they were joking, and when they were lying. I still have trouble with this. I can be naive. I let myself be deceived. I decided to take revenge, or perhaps grow up. I decided to speak in such a way that people wouldn't know when I was serious and when I was joking. The funniest thing about all of this is that I am a person myself. I too have trouble recognizing what I say seriously and what I say for a joke. Or maybe, in the end, it's not that important?

#### 4.

The world is irreducible in an inevitable way. It is not a fraction that could be simplified. Anyone who tries to simplify it introduces unexpected complications with their simplification. Existence regulates itself. It arises by itself and disappears by itself. However, it is not so simple. The fundamental drive of consciousness is the desire for self-simplification in many forms. The desire to reduce the effort of enduring, controlling, remembering, and predicting.

Conscious thinking, which is sometimes useful, is always analytical; it requires simplification, the selection of so-called essential things, and the omission of so-called less important things. Sometimes this brings benefits, sometimes disadvantages, but above all, it cannot be avoided when its time comes. The words that describe reality contradict each other just as parts of reality stand in opposition to one another. I do not treat this as a logical contradiction because reality appears to me as true. It is a different kind of contradiction.

Truth is the sum of all possible lies. Its truthfulness hides in the concept of possibility. This sounds idiotic, but I think I am somewhat right. Or rather, truth possesses me amidst all other things.

By nihilism, I understand a situation in which one does not know better than oneself. Such nihilism is very useful and can bring many benefits to the person and their surroundings.

The world must be incredibly complicated in order for it to appear simple to us. And conversely, what once seemed complicated to us turns out to be simple. Or actually, it's not the other way around. It's not the other way around at all. The world is both simple and complicated. Simple to exist. Complicated to understand.

## 5.

I have walked a long way, exploring various worldviews, and the ways the East and the West value things. This has enriched me greatly with general knowledge, sometimes entirely inexplicably practical, and sometimes impractical—which is also practical in its own way. Now I like to think that I have, in a sense, returned to the starting point. I don't regret this. Quite the opposite.

A certain master once said that we possessed perfect knowledge back when we knew nothing. It was a closed system of beliefs. It didn't require any expansion with the new or omission of the old. It's a delightful joke, one that contains a grain of truth.

How wonderfully simple the world of consciousness must have been for the early human. There were no conventional categories, no language, no views to adhere to or to abandon. Instead of contemplation, there was pure existence. A con-

consciousness of experiences, stripped of the compulsive chatter about them and their justification with ideas. Life was lived in the here and now. How immense fear, dread, curiosity, pleasure, joy, and inexpressible tension must have been—but perhaps there were at least none of these persistent dilemmas. None of this tearing the pine apart, which brings no good and nothing constructive. Maybe that's just a dream.

## 6.

In the beginning, there was existence. Consciousness, as part of it, knew no words. Then the word appeared. The symbol emerged and took hold of consciousness. Consciousness sought to dominate existence with the help of the symbol. It thought it ruled the symbol, and that the symbol could describe the world. Yet symbols evolve in ways that cannot be fully controlled, and existence is not confined to symbols.

Pure existence is not any kind of symbol; it signifies nothing. It is itself. It cannot be inauthentic or inaccessible. It is everything we experience as it manifests itself, nothing less and nothing more. I am part of existence, and I cannot oppose it, yield to it, comprehend it, master it, or predict it. I am neither its lord nor its slave. Such words are meaningless in the realm of pure existence. It is impossible not to experience pure existence. Contrary to its name, there is nothing outside of it.

By the end of the text, it becomes apparent that words mean something slightly different than they did at the beginning. We comment on that which comments on us. We can theorize extensively about some experience, inventing things that seem reasonable to us. But all our knowledge and pride burst like a bubble when we personally undergo the very expe-



riences we spoke about—relying on our own stories, our own judgments, and our own memories.

In my opinion, enlightenment is the direct realization that there is no such thing as enlightenment. It is a momentary experience, one that can be reached and from which one can also depart. There is no liberation, for there is nothing from which we could be liberated. Fixing existence is absurd. Existence is not a broken mechanism. I don't believe in enlightenment, liberation, or repair. There is no singular fall or ascent, as there are numerous falls and ascents.

So what can I do as a conscious being mastered by symbols? Above all, not split hairs endlessly. Trust pure existence and throw myself into it. Allow myself to be both perfect and imperfect, calm and emotional. Distinguish words from the rest of existence. Create for words and images their own world—a playground—and let them act upon it. Instead of dwelling in irresolvable conflicts, simply accept their existence. Do what occurs to you.

Existence happens on its own. It is not the goal of consciousness to sustain existence with anything imposed on it. Existence sustains itself. You simply live and do what you will. The practical conclusions drawn from the revelations of consciousness are made by existence, not consciousness.

## 7.

I love rationalism but cannot stand rationalists. The supernatural is foreign to me because I try to perceive it as entirely natural. I enjoy skepticism, but only as a kind of perverse game with myself, not as a manifestation of paranoia. Woe to those without a sense of humor who believe in conspiracy or universal theories. Their seriousness is, to me, the epitome of

comedy. Existence unfolds so lightly and solidly at the same time precisely because it cannot be fully grasped or wholly advocated for. There is no “cause” of existence.

I find those rationalists amusing who reach for their assumptions only once. I deeply admire the intricacy of the constructions they build upon such weak foundations. These are magnificent castles on ice. Anyone curious about the limits of human capability should explore them. I, too, marvel at them. But I discourage living in them for too long. Reality is unforgiving to those who deceive themselves by claiming they’ve grasped the whole truth. Obvious assumptions paired with obvious reasoning, isolated from obvious experience, lead to absurdities after a while. Rationalists dislike it when these absurdities are, well, obvious. But then, no one enjoys failure.

Rationalists are rational in an irrational and absurd way. I prefer to be irrational and absurd in a rational way. The difference lies mainly in scale and in acknowledging one’s limitations. We all rationalize, and we can’t avoid it. We search for meaning as if looking for cracks in a whole. Sometimes this brings benefits. Sometimes we get stuck. I try not to jump to conclusions but also not to believe I can avoid jumping to them. It’s delightful to be cynical toward oneself while not condemning one’s limitations.

I can’t imagine every possibility. My memory is flawed. The most astonishing thing is that when we arrive at the feeling of understanding something, we don’t know how it happened. What once seemed magical to us loses its magic. What fascinates me, though, is precisely this process—and that I do not understand it.

Our trust in the world is weak if we need supernatural intervention and black boxes for every little thing. This is crafts-

manship in the production of miracles, which blinds us to the palpable wonder of pure existence.

## 8.

Poor nihilism. So misunderstood and so often cursed. No one has a kind word to say about it. Everyone snarls at it, and everyone fights it. Everyone who, as they say, has convictions. In truth, nothing is more dangerous to convictions than nihilism—or so they think. No one sees that it is the most dignified of all faiths, the hardest to destroy and the hardest to master. That is to say, everyone who has convictions does see it, and that's precisely why they're afraid to speak of it. There is no such thing as what is not spoken of. Nothing could be more wrong. It appears twice as strongly and even more entangled.

Complicated, and yet so simple, is nihilism. It does not require temples, organizations, crowds, or reverence, and yet it is pure respect and devotion. It is everything and nothing. In its most splendid form, it is unrestrained restraint. Nihilism is a surrender to pure existence and a rejection of the belief in the possibility of such surrender. No one can be a fully conscious nihilist. To some extent, we are all unconscious nihilists. Nihilism requires both accepting and rejecting hypocrisy—accepting it as the foundation of action and rejecting it as an absolute concept.

Nihilists gather stacks of convictions from all over the world. They sometimes use them like master keys, but they do not seek wholeness or absolutes in them. The first exercise of a nihilist is to reduce their own convictions to absurdity. It is painful and shocking. The second exercise involves experiencing how these professed absurd convictions occasionally

bring unexpected practical benefits. This is both heartening and liberating.

The nihilist offers their convictions as sacrifices to pure existence. In doing so, they pay homage, which pure existence remains entirely indifferent to. Yet, offering these sacrifices brings the nihilist relief. Let them continue, for no one will stop them anyway. I do not fully understand nihilism, but I am a nihilist. I cannot help but be one. Nihilistic exercises seem to be in my nature.

## 9.

I am not so foolish as to believe that the world surrounding me is an illusion. For something to be an illusion, there must be an awakening from that illusion. At least an awakening into another dream. Meanwhile, there is no escape from the world and life to something beyond the world and life. To leave the world, one must leave the world. Beyond the world, there is no division between illusion and reality. By the very definition of the world, beyond the world, there is nothing.

Everything I experience is simultaneously an illusion and a reality. An illusion, because no thought of mine fully reflects the world. No perspective on the world is the world itself. A reality, because there is nothing more authentic than what I experience. Only what I perceive and experience at the same time in a given moment can be authentic for me in that moment.

I constantly feel the unity of consciousness and its continuity through time. I cannot understand why I see both motion and stillness if the past is always slipping away and the future is always yet to come. Although there is nothing else to rely on, one cannot fully trust one's memories. The idea of in-

tersubjectivity draws me in like a drug, even though it is murky and often contradicts my everyday experience. That must be accounted for.

## 10.

What is most characteristic of my inner self is the irreducible tension between solipsism and the belief in the falseness of solipsism. How can I be a solipsist and not go mad? Well, it's just as simple as holding any other belief while continuing to exist. On a daily basis, I live like a regular person, with all the mundane joys and sorrows.

It is only when I feel the stirrings of metaphysical impulses that I begin to theorize. When I have nothing to do and feel empty and drained, I start to fill myself up. I divide the world into consciousness and the revelation manifesting to it. Consciousness will never know another consciousness. It is an infinitely brief segment on the axis of time. These segments connect to form a curve, always with an unclear beginning and end. That curve is the mind itself—existing in time. Consciousness is so connected to revelation that concepts like free will, chance, and destiny become inadequate and blur into one. Consciousness is never alone. Revelation is always there with it. Yet consciousness is always lonely. By definition, it never has direct contact with another consciousness. It is always forced to fantasize about it. Is it fantasizing correctly? That's the wrong question. It fantasizes irresistibly, and as experience shows, it often fantasizes pragmatically. There is no compulsion of free will.

I used to fear solipsism. I was afraid of its egotism—that it was improper and would bring trouble. To hell with it! I truly enjoy my solipsism. I'm attached to it. I grew up with it, and

nothing bad has happened. And when I act inconsistently with my beliefs? First of all, it's not clear that I have fully-formed beliefs about everything. Second, being a hypocrite feels so dignified. What can I do when I'm so fascinated by consciousness and revelation, and yet I know nothing beyond my own imaginings of myself?

I pass by others like a planet passing other planets. We almost align our orbits; we're about to collide and merge thoughts into one, but then we start to drift apart and fade into obscurity for one another. I used to struggle with this deeply. I crave and fear collectivism. I fear losing my past in a crowd, even though I enjoy losing it on my own. Always a little different from others, I stand at the sidelines of people and observe them. I get used to acquaintances slowly and detach from them just as slowly. I don't have many friends. I suppose I have just as many as I need. I like strong bonds, and that takes time. I have neither the time nor the inclination to be sociable. I prefer privacy. So far, I've done quite well with it.

## 11.

Everywhere I see the mystery of existence. Even though existence is mysterious, it has never caused existence to lose anything of itself. I do not trust the concepts of god, truth, or assertion. These are demagogic concepts, which every person in every moment understands slightly differently—or completely differently. These words serve to stir people in ways that are never fully predictable and sometimes entirely unpredictable. They bring liberation, followed by bitterness. Many words fulfill similar roles. In fact, all words and all silences serve a similar purpose. They are expressions of humanity's cognitive aggression against the world. Aggression that sets

itself pragmatic, life-oriented goals. Humanity is great, yet so small. The world may yield but is mighty. Humanity is capable of conquering much, but the world grinds it into dust. Slowly, but systematically.

I am an agnostic, or rather an anti-gnostic. I adore nihilistic exercises. There is something of a pyromaniac in me. I play with fire because I enjoy toying with my own and others' views. First, I reduce theories to absurdities, and then I apply them quite successfully. We all play with fire. Does it destroy us? Sometimes.

## **12.**

I guard myself against faith but trust in acquired habits. What is the difference? Faith is a conscious declaration of the truthfulness of certain views. No declaration will ever encompass the world. Perhaps for some, declarations replace the world, but for me, given the choice to heed part of the world or its entirety, I prefer to heed the entirety. It feels safer this way. What a hypocrite I am! Habits are never declarations. They are actions. That which operates within us. I constantly change my habits, but I always have some. I like having them. They are often beneficial to me, and that is why I trust them. And when they fail, I am angry, but not at myself, because they are the unconscious backdrop. There are no conscious habits. Only faith is conscious. Faith is dangerous. When it fails, I am angry with myself for trusting it. I cannot be angry at my habits, because I cannot help but trust them.

## **13.**

How naive are those who believe that through discussion, truth will come to the surface. All those lies—kind, cruel, or living their own lives—are precisely what truth is. There is

nothing to surface, as it is always afloat everywhere. It floats and holds us firmly in its grasp. Sometimes too firmly.

Discussions, indeed, can be useful, but for entirely different reasons. They are a form of steering and exerting influence. For some, they silence voices. For the weak, they teach nothing but submissiveness to the stronger. Strong adversaries are resistant to competing arguments. They toughen one another in their own convictions. At most, they might irritate or inflame one another. A strong opponent can only be taken down by relentless harassment. The strong are those who are charmers of people and words.

Brainstorms and negotiations are something altogether different from discussions. In discussions, the goal is to achieve absolute correctness. In brainstorming, it is to put forward any ideas whatsoever. In negotiations, it is to divide spheres of influence.

#### 14.

I do not know what death is, for by definition, one can truly die only once. The irreversible change in scenery, which confuses our habits, evokes fear. We feel the pain of pain. However, the act of dying itself is not something to fear.

Our self dies every evening and awakens in an unknown world, only to leave it by morning. There is waking, there is dreaming, there is the past in my memory. Yet, I never remember the transitions between wakefulness and sleep. There is always before or after, but never during. We will never die in our waiting, just as we were never born in our memory, though our existence is limited on both sides. There is always the here and now. Although it always seems the same, it is always a little somewhere else. At least in this sense, we are constantly



being reborn and dying. The past also does not belong to us. We remember little of it.

People invent soul journeys after death out of their aversion to non-existence. Yet, there is nothing unpleasant in non-existence. I do not know whether I would find it distasteful if I had to live an eternal life after a supposed death. Such an endless life, without any respite, forever?

Reconciliation with time and inevitability has its advantages. After all, the entire flavor of life depends on its transience, its placement in time, and its irreversibility. Life has no remote control. You can only enjoy the moment when it seems exceptional, transient. Suffering must also be temporary. Consciousness seems to exist continuously in its own time. However, averaging consciousness over its own time makes no sense. For existence, in the only way I know it—momentary—there is no difference whether there is some kind of conventional reincarnation, eternal life, or whether it does not exist at all. There is always one, always authentic moment, a momentary thought, momentary emotion, momentary will, momentary fading memory, and momentary expectation.

Consciousness cannot have any limitations by its very nature. Consciousness is limited, but it has no limitations. Although the film cuts off, it never really stops. One cannot be aware of the unconscious. We have trouble accepting time because everything, including time itself, we try to define in relation to time. Tearing the pine apart brings no benefit.

## 15.

We have only just learned to distinguish between the concepts of determinism and predictability. What is determined

does not necessarily have to be predictable in the long run. Determinism is simply a type of rule that specifies what will happen next, once something specific has happened. From the perspective of my life, it doesn't matter whether I call this rule determinism or time. Yes. Time is simply a linear ordering of events in my life. One thing follows another.

I can calmly say that my life is determined. I don't need to penetrate into the conditions of my fate. I will define the rule simply by pairing the consequences of each moment in my life. Nothing is repeatable unless it is perfectly repeatable. If it is perfectly repeatable, my rule also does not fail. Either history is open, or it closes in a circle. The answer to this question has no practical significance. A true rule has no practical significance. The existence of time is not predictability. To see what will really happen, one must wait. Doctrine is empty.

It is wonderful that free will does not exist. There are only actions and their consequences. Free will does not exist because in order to act, I do not have to consciously make decisions. When I wonder what to do and am tormented by doubts, I act just as well as when I choose. If you don't believe that I act, then notice that I act, namely by wondering what to do, tormented by doubts. I do not consciously decide this.

Some believe that actions have no consequences if there is no free will. This is absurd. Suffering and joy exist independently of the existence of free will. Much of the suffering comes from the pursuit of free will. I was very happy when I discovered that there is nothing to chase. I can rest. Free will enslaves as an endless set of imaginings about it. It is like a treadmill. Will exists, but it is not free. For will to exist, it must be limited. What is unlimited cannot exist in a self-aware way, because it cannot encompass itself.

## 16.

For any given orthodoxy, there are heresies. Some statements may be heresies. It is relatively easy to protect oneself from such heresies. One simply has to make their propagation difficult. However, orthodoxies do not last forever. There are also heresies that take the form of questions. When the time comes, the question appears. Any attempt to relate to this question places our conception of orthodoxy in a completely new light. Questions cannot be stopped. They dig and dig into the mind like butter. Since orthodoxies exist solely as our conceptions of them, our new conception becomes a completely new orthodoxy. Depending on who holds the new conception, it is seen either as still an orthodoxy or already a heresy.

Everyone has slightly different views, and dividing minds based on their verbal declarations is never entirely correct for our purposes. Nevertheless, labels are important to us because it is difficult to discern what lies behind them. I myself use labels regarding myself, as my interior is fluid and unfathomable to me. Labels play with conventions, and we bear the consequences of this. The fluid and unfathomable sometimes reveals itself. To its answers, we pose questions, which sooner or later become heresies.

We already have the answer. It surrounds us. All that remains is to form the appropriate questions to it. Most often, these are foolish questions. Why is there talk of the miracle of birth, but not of the miracle of death? Why is there talk of divine providence, but not of divine misfortune? The world is not made to fit the mind, although the mind is also useful. They spoke of sacred truths, they spoke of sacred lies, so perhaps we should also speak of sacred jokes? A single drawing

is worth a thousand words. One question is worth a thousand answers.

**17.**

Personal final settlements make little sense. The sufferings of yesterday cannot be summed up with the joy of today and the result entered into tomorrow. Such a calculation cannot be performed independently of a specific human perspective. It is similar to the parallel transfer of tangent vectors on a curved surface. When we move vectors from one point to another, our result also depends on the path we take.

Similarly, to definitively assess things in the world, we must project the world onto a number line. Each such projection is a flattening, an identification of different things as one. The projection of the world is not the world. Order, the relationship of the majority, exists only on the number line. In higher-dimensional spaces, there is no definite order. Taking two objects from such spaces, we cannot reasonably decide in what order they should appear relative to each other. To say what is better and what is worse, one must have such an order. I do not have it, as the world is, to me, multidimensional.

Final settlements can only make sense in solipsism. There, there is only one naturally absolute path, along which temporary worlds can be moved and added together. This path is the proper time, which is the absolute time. And indeed, solitude leads to settlements, while companionship leads away from them.

**18.**

Once, people did not know death, and although they died, they were immortal. When people discovered death, they longed for permanence. Since they could not endure forever

themselves, they created cultures to endure for them forever. However, existence is life, not permanence. Cultures too are born, bloom, wither, and die. And even if they were to last forever, they will always die and fade into oblivion. Life requires forgetting something in order to continue living. Permanence requires remembering everything to persist.

Permanence is contradictory to life. There is no permanence, but life exists. So how to reconcile with the transience? There is no escape into eternity for those who have discovered the transience of cultures. The fear of transience must be overcome by a temporary adaptation to reality. Adaptation excludes fear. Death is not something that awaits me. Death happens here and now. Death is life. I die at every moment and am reborn at every moment. He who fears death also fears life. He who knows how to live will also know how to die.

Temporary adaptation is an adjustment, not attachment. When a feeling of a threshold arrives, I arrange my own funeral. I tidy up my things. I return to the world what I no longer need. I offer up my former beliefs. I feel some nostalgia, but I also feel refreshed. Looking back, I look ahead. Newly born, yet experienced. I like surrounding myself with simple things because I have enough complexity within.

## **19.**

Here is the boundary of the worthy and hungry for praise nihilism. Even if I wanted to deny the value of everything, to mock everything with a sacred laugh, despite my sincerest intentions, I would not be able to betray myself. The possibility of not being oneself, of opposing one's own nature, is not given. Nature may seem contradictory, but it is always unam-

biguous at every moment. It is what happens in a given moment.

What is happening? No matter what is happening, there is no need to add worries with my own unease. If something can be done, a good deed is better than fear. If nothing can be done, fear is useless, though it imposes itself, and there is no need to hide it from oneself.

Perfection is not given. It cannot be defined in an internally consistent way. It is not easy. I am not the incarnation of good, and unfortunately, I am not the incarnation of evil. I have a small mind and small, primitive feelings. Even higher feelings and dilemmas can only be primitive. This primitiveness has its good sides. What is primitive is rather resistant. It may seem to be influenced, but it returns to its old ways once the pressure weakens. It will not soar, but it will not fall either. It persists in its mediocrity for a while, and nothing suggests it will suddenly change. It is bearable.

I am not the incarnation of good. My altruism is insincere because it is limited by the instinct for self-preservation. Unfortunately, I am not the incarnation of evil. How nice it would be to be it. Unfortunately, sometimes pity takes hold of me. Pity, devoid of reason, flows from the depths of my nature like blind anger. Both in one and the other, there is something primitive, animalistic. This is not conscience, these are not views. It is something that drives me despite all sense. A bit of pity will not help the world for long, and an attack of aggression will not shake the world. But try to oppose them, and you will feel unbearable. Of course, you can try to deceive them with clever tricks. That's what you have reason for. Thus, there is also rational charity, motivated by the fear of an

uncontrolled attack of senseless pity. There is also substitute aggression.

They say that enlightenment is not given to the incarnations of good or the incarnations of evil. It is only given to humans. That sounds pompous, and it is worth ridiculing this view. But let me consider it, for I am laughing at myself. Perhaps that is healthy.

## **20.**

Everything that reaches us cannot be merely part of what reaches us. In particular, for example, the world is not just color. Nevertheless, many people like to believe in such things. This should not be disregarded.

If there are no gods, they exist convincingly in human minds. It does not matter that they exist only there. That does not diminish the role of gods; it merely brings people down to earth. In this sense, gods exist undeniably. It does not matter that people believe in things they have no understanding of. They believe unshakably. Many believe this way, many that way, and each believes differently and similarly. This should not be disregarded.

Some believe in two kinds of truths. The first kind is ordinary truths. The second kind is deep truths. If we deny an ordinary truth, we get a false statement. If we deny a deep truth, we get another deep truth. Many like to believe in nonsense, often being aware of its absurdity. This should not be disregarded.

What is existence? How to state that something truly exists, and something truly does not exist? What is something, what is existence, and what is truth? Instead of talking about existence, I prefer to say that something is imposed upon me.

Many believe that this way of speaking is better. This should not be disregarded.

Everything cannot be everything, for what is everything is nothing. Many like to believe in the unquestionability of conventions suggested by their language and grammar. This should not be disregarded.

There are those who undertake spiritual development in order to finally discover themselves. But how can one remain oneself if one wants to change oneself? How to discover what is obvious? Many believe in the possibility of development, and many believe in the possibility of downfall. This should not be disregarded.

Statements cannot be proven by example or by assuming the thesis. Unfortunately, some axioms must be taken out of thin air. Out of thin air, not out of nothing. Many believe it is otherwise. This should not be disregarded.

I am not afraid to think analytically about anything to which I have an emotional connection. I believe too strongly in the solidity of existence to think that my critical reflections can shake the foundations of the world. And even if they were to shake them, what does it matter? It is as it is. This should not be disregarded.

One cannot pay attention to everything. There are no senses and no time. In choice, it is not about choosing truth, but about choosing taste. Besides, there is no choice once taste already exists. If someone can choose, it is only those who lack taste. Taste can be more important than truth, and kitsch is the cost of sincerity. Truth is immense and incomprehensible, while taste is small but stylish. Something must be disregarded. This should not be disregarded.



Those who believe in truth surrender apathetically to those who are the custodians of that truth. The custodians do not need to believe in order to wield power over the believers. If the condition of democracy is the separation of powers, what should one think about the separation of faith? Reason, feelings, and strength should not be disregarded.

## 21.

If there are two fundamentally different opposites at both ends, there must be a boundary separating one from the other. However, the position of this boundary is not given absolutely. There is no boundary, but there is a difference. The boundary is a matter of agreements and conventions, while the difference imposes itself. The boundary is strict, rigid, easily broken, and nothing happens to the one who breaks it. The difference is difficult to capture, seems fluid, constantly eludes, and woe to those who ignore it.

Once, I believed in the reality of boundaries. I saw it, and beyond it was an abyss. I believed it existed, even though I took a step and didn't fall. Today, I perceive the world not as a simple abyss. Extremes are not the only things available. Honestly, the extremes seem improbable to me. Day to day, it is rather ordinary. Even what astonishes us is rather old-new. We wallow in relative eternity. Sometimes we change something, but often, it is not what we think has been changed.

## 22.

Also, at the foundation of science, which is part of my culture, there lies the hidden cult of emptiness. Mathematics considers a concept precise if it is able to construct a concept with identical properties from an empty set. Similarly, some

physicists create models of the world by generating everything from an abstract state of vacuum.

Abstractions are sometimes tricks that give us useful answers, and sometimes they are art for art's sake. I don't particularly admire art for art's sake. One can write many pages without coming to anything. Few problems can truly be solved. There comes an end, and all problems solve themselves. All threads of action resolve themselves.

The longer I apply abstractions for practical purposes, the less I am moved by those who give reverent honor to the rising abstractions. Abstractions are writings, images, and words.

Understanding consists of understanding that there is no understanding. In abstraction, there is no understanding. In being, there is nothing to understand. Explaining is reducing one thing to another. Being is being. It cannot be reduced to something else. Abstractions are abstractions. Some of them can be expressed through others. Nevertheless, there is nothing to understand here. The death of ontology! Instead of understanding, I know temporary habituation.

Abstractions cannot be understood. Abstractions can only be applied, adored, or applied and adored simultaneously. I don't like to adore anything, so I just apply them. Any sentence repeated ten times loses its meaning and becomes a truth.

### 23.

The world is undoubtedly logical. Even if only because I have certain logical intuitions. I perceive order, and by perceiving it, I make the order reveal itself to me. So why, when I apply logic to the world, do I always end up in absurdity if I go far enough? Logical tautologies are fine. The devil is in the details. The details are predicates.

The world is not any predicate. We have predicates. We do not have the world. The world has us. We do not have the freedom to decide about the world. We match predicates to our understanding. We match concepts to understanding. Then we logically infer. In the end, we match the world to our results. This foretells successes and failures. The world cannot be fully matched. It cannot be described, grasped, or understood.

## 24.

I do not believe in any experience of liberation by myself. Liberation is, after all, liberation from existence. One cannot exist without existing. I believe that death truly exists. A person dies for real because they die even before death. Before death, a person progressively fades and loses themselves. If they were to continue living, that life would have to be vegetative. They could not live fully if they did not suddenly break with their past. They would not be themselves.

Next to the beginning exists the end. This end is liberation, regardless of when it happens. It is the end of existence. I believe that one day I will experience death, but I will never experience it. Just as I experienced, but did not experience, the beginning. So, one day I will experience liberation, but I will never experience it. There is no contradiction in this belief.

I believe in reincarnation. The most obvious one, and therefore completely unrecognized. I die from minute to minute and am continually born anew. With each moment, I am different, yet still, it is I. A year ago, I was completely different, and next year, I will be different too. Not the same kind, but the very same. Pure nonsense. I understand that, ultimately, the same kind may not be the very same. But for

the very same to not be the same kind? How can I believe in such absurdity? And yet, I do. It is obvious.

At every moment, I die. Something in me fades. At every moment, I am reborn. Something in me still remains. Momentary death and rebirth follow one another unambiguously, one following the other. From one comes the other. There are conditions according to which rebirth follows death. The previous sentence is a definition of conditions, not a statement about them. There are reasons for sadness and joy.

## 25.

If something ought to be done, one ought to begin with the momentary experience of the world from one's own point of view. This momentary experience should be the starting point, but one ought not to depart from it in the slightest. It must be taken along on the journey. There is no need to guard it, for wherever you look, it will always be there.

The world does not exist because thinkers know how it ought to look. People do good and bad things not because they have grasped the nature of abstract good or evil. Things endure simply because endurance is in their nature. For endurance to be effective, it does not necessarily require self-reflection. There is no need to provide answers. There is a need to ask questions. How strange we seem to ourselves!

If, indeed, the world required support from some meaning to exist, how fragile its existence would be. Existence is strangely certain, while only our views crumble. I abandon meaning and surrender to existence. For better or worse, everything we do is natural. The absolute answer brings uncertainty and dread. The skeptical question brings peace. Existence has no meaning, existence has content.

## 26.

The most ingenious invention of humanity is hypocrisy. Hypocrisy allows us to reconcile acceptance of reality with unwavering belief in what, on average, it pays to believe in. Hypocrisy exists not because the world is good or bad, but because it is complex. Human beliefs, by their very nature, must be simple. For a person to survive, they must be compensated by the complexity of human nature. Hypocrisy is the mechanism that enables us to appeal beyond our own beliefs without completely negating them.

Like any mechanism, hypocrisy is not perfect. Our bodies and minds, too, are imperfect in our judgment. Sometimes belief breaks through reality, and in those moments, hypocrisy falters. There is no point in judging whether this is good or bad if there is no way to change it for better or worse. Hypocrisy is not harmed even by speaking about it. Do not fear talking about hypocrisy—it will not destroy it. There is no need to fight it. Hypocrisy must be tamed. Untamed hypocrisy is an enemy, while tamed hypocrisy is a friend. Untamed hypocrisy is the one you fight against. Tamed hypocrisy is the one you listen to. You may act against someone else's hypocrisy, but do not act against your own. It may not be wise, but it has its own logic. Listen to it, for otherwise, it will drive you mad.

## 27.

My country does not exist. Nowhere do I feel at home. There's always something lurking in the background. I do not run away from the world because I know I have nowhere to go. I observe and coexist with what I like and what I dislike. With what favors me and what threatens me. I accept it.

My land does not exist. Can a single person create a new land? There have been cases, supposedly, but do lands exist as they were originally created? Would they not feel foreign to their founders? Would the founders themselves, as they were yesterday, not feel foreign to themselves today? Would I not be the first mortal enemy of a newly created land? Would I not enemize myself to death? Perhaps a land must be created in secret, even from oneself, so that one cannot later hold it against oneself. It's all so fanciful.

Lands do not exist. This is not a good metaphor. If I am to reflect, I prefer to reflect on something calmer. A few months ago, I finally learned how to swim and gained a new metaphor.

Surviving among others is like swimming. They are like water. Without them, I would die, yet in excess, they threaten me. The greatest danger to me might be myself. I must not panic. Any sudden movements pull me down. Flailing exhausts me, leaving me too weak to stay afloat. That's the fastest way to drown. To remain myself in some measure, I must adapt to the water in some measure. I must accept that slow, harmonious movements will keep me afloat. There is a satisfying balance. Every motion serves a purpose, and I can survive astonishingly long. Seemingly, I do nothing, and yet I swim. I listen to the water, and the water listens to me. Strangers to one another, we coexist. We change constantly, and in doing so, we remain ourselves without anxiety. The will to survive is on my side, and the water accepts this, as long as I systematically remind it. That reminder is my duty, not the water's. The water demands nothing from me. It is I who feel the compulsion to be other than I am. It is I who understand myself, not the water. Hence, the duty is mine. This higher

necessity can even be quite pleasant, as long as I do not grow too tired.

**28.**

They are constantly on the move. They feel compelled to see everything. They read everything, because they must know everything. Something drives them. Is it necessary? I am not able to know everything. I am not able to hold onto everything I have learned. It is valuable to have something to discover, but chasing after the extraordinary is not the condition for peace. To find peace, one must, of course, discover a few extraordinary things, but one must also be able to recognize the ordinary within them. The ordinary is the condition for enlightenment, which I do not believe in, but live by.

**29.**

Love is as ambivalent as language. They say that passionate love is the noblest of feelings. That's pure nonsense. Love is selfish. Only indifference is altruistic. However, selfishness does not have to be bad, and altruism does not have to be good. I do not wish to engage in such considerations. One thing seems certain to me: Altruism cannot be built on universal love. Universal love is not the same as kindness. Kindness must be at least somewhat indifferent.

If I were to say what the worst thing I have ever known is, I would answer: it is love. It is an unhappy love. It fuels all doubts and extinguishes the joy of life. Unfulfilled love stirs unhealthy passion that burns bridges with others. Euphoria masks loneliness, and irritation with loneliness pushes one towards nastiness. Cursed are those whom I do not love, especially when they are happy. Beware of that turmoil.

If I were to say what the most wonderful thing I have ever known is, I would answer: it is love. It is a happy love. It dispels all doubts and awakens the joy of life. It allows a person to believe in their own goodness towards another person. As for others, they do not matter at all. Those whom I do not love benefit from my good mood. Who knows, perhaps they benefit more than those whom I love. This is precisely what altruism in indifference is all about.

When I say that love can be good, it is not because it seems altruistic. No. It is good because it is the best remedy for an excess of solipsism. Happy love, like death, removes all questions about the meaning of life. Happy love stimulates selfishness and kindly indifference. Happy love suppresses solipsism and its wild dreams of altruistic love.

### 30.

It is certain that someone will misunderstand me. It could be me. The world is the only home of man. However, the world is not a world designed to meet human needs and expectations. The world is a world made to fit human capabilities. Human needs and expectations are not made to fit human capabilities. The world proudly flexes its mysteriousness, while man craves easy answers. This cannot be changed. I return to bed to sleep some more, because I am tired. I have put a spell onto myself.

*Warsaw, January 1998*



# Human Animal

## I.

When a good person dies, their body becomes impure. It takes many evil forces for the cause of good to suffer any kind of defeat. Killing a good person requires evil to consume their body entirely. When a good person dies, their goodness perishes with them, and the body becomes a domain of evil. Keep away from corpses. Avoid everything that comes from the bodies of the holiest people as you would the worst plague. The body of a dead saint is the most impure thing in the world. Overcoming a saint requires the greatest amount of evil. When evil kills, it remains in the corpse.

## II.

There are two worlds that exist. There is the world of objects, which we call getik. There is also the world of spirits, which we call menok. Getik is the world of reality. Menok is the world of obviousness. Getik is the world of the actualized. Menok is the world of the imagined. Everything that exists in getik desires to have its enduring reflection in menok. Everything that exists in menok longs for its tangible reflection in getik. For satisfaction can only be achieved by that which ex-

ists in these two ways. Or at least, so it seems until it is experienced.

### III.

And perhaps humans do not create cultures but rather discover them as acceptable states of the human psyche? The universal contempt they evoke around themselves makes them entirely safe. Their enemies are so disgusted by them that they cannot get close enough to inflict any harm. And yet, from everyone's shoes, the thinking reed protrudes.

#### 1.

There exists in the world a peculiar animal that stands out by resembling other animals in roughly the same way as various animals resemble one another. It differs in much the same way that other animals differ. Birds have wings, fish have scales, insects have tracheae, and human animals have opinions. You ask, what permanent part of a human could opinions be, and how can they be part of the body if they are fleeting? Well, humans change their opinions as they grow. Snakes shed their skin as they grow. Before shedding, the skin is an essential part of the snake's body. Just as there is no snake without skin, there is no human without opinions.

#### 2.

The human animal is the one that has opinions. The fact that it can share thoughts does not make it any less animal than other animals are made by their organs. Despite all culture, animality seeps out of the human. All culture is one great animality oozing out of the human, endlessly exceeding itself. If, indeed, opinions were something more than an expression of animality, of tangible existence, then humans would be able

to subsist entirely on absolute abstractions. But that is not the case. Humans love to operate with eternities, absolutes, truths. They revere their own greatness in them and worship transcendence. It seems to them that the opinions they hold lend them a touch of their own timelessness. Humans are greater than animals because they engage with abstraction. Woe, however, to absolute abstraction that is not embodied, tangibly existing. Humans have no interest in such an absolute.

### 3.

The sequence is as follows. First, humans dream of soaring above the rest on the wings of their opinions. They dream that their glorious opinions will be a reflection of the world, as the divine *menok* reflects everything in *getik* a hundredfold better. We are vigilant to ensure that our opinions are coherent, logical, and complete. We justify them. First, we do something; we look for reasons later. We love justifying. We do it skillfully. So skillfully, in fact, that we fool even ourselves. We soar. *Menok* itself reveals its splendid obviousness to us. Behold, we have come to know transcendence. We have come to know the unknowable. We have experienced the incorporeal. Now all that remains is for us to gorge ourselves. Since transcendence and we are one, we have total power over it. This wonderfully materialized transcendence, tangibly overwhelming, we use to take care of our own affairs. What use is there in something that cannot be utilized this way?

### 4.

We are afraid of the unknown. This is our human way of dealing with this problem. We take something we intuitively understand perfectly. Something we navigate with ease. We

call that something the unknown. Thus, we have tamed the unknown. Now it is ours, and it will listen to us. These are our opinions. The true unknown is not ours. It lurks somewhere in the shadows and haunts us at night. Yes, we are afraid of it, but there is nothing terrifying about that. When we are a little scared, we run for help to our familiar unknown. When we are more frightened and realize that our familiar unknown does not help, we quickly find solace in another familiar unknown. We can continue like this endlessly. We must. There is no other way.

5.

Poor transcendence. It hears humanity calling for it to come. It comes, reveals itself to us. But we do not see it because we see it always and everywhere. Against the background, we notice a falling feather. Someone shouts about a miracle. A crowd gathers. Another person calls out and also does not see transcendence for the same reason. This person is not deceived but instead complains. "Oh, transcendence, why do you not appear here and now if you are real? If you are real, how can you be intangible? You can mean nothing to me if you remain unmaterialized, because I myself am material, tangible, and particular." Poor transcendence. It matters to humans only when it is simultaneously tangible and absolute. Transcendence in itself is absolute, but if it is to be tangible, it loses its transcendence and absoluteness.

6.

Opinions are a great feast for humans. Human sustenance is transcendence. In their tendency to ruminate, the human animal resembles a cow. First, we take in opinions and test how they taste. We examine whether they are fresh

and whether they might harm us. We swallow. The opinions reach our hundred-chambered stomach. There, we begin to chew them thoroughly. We do this whenever we have a free moment. Analyzing opinions into small pieces makes them easier to digest. We find it utterly delightful to stew in our own juices. It gives us the pleasant feeling that we are on the right path. One day, we decide it is worth leaving something behind. Something compels us to do so. We leave behind what fertilizes the future nourishment of others.

7.

The conclusion to be drawn is that no opinion can permanently satisfy our appetite. There is no transcendence that, in excess, would not harm us. There is no transcendence that could suffice for everything. There is no transcendence that is completely safe. The world is inevitably dangerous. We satisfy our hunger once, but some time later, we must eat again to reaffirm our strength. Sometimes we tire of the taste or fall ill, and then we change our diet. We also have our preferences, which we call character and disposition. We have memories of what has harmed us or others. We also know how to forget—often involuntarily.

8.

The essence of all opinions lies not in what they bring but in the impression that they bring something. This is precisely why we cannot be satisfied by them and continually hunger for more. We keep digesting them, but we will never fully digest them. Thinking gives the impression of rising above one's own nature. This might lead one to believe that thinking causes schizophrenia. However, that is not the case. Schizophrenia would only arise if reality could be inauthentic. Reality, how-

ever, exists and thus cannot be inauthentic in its existence. What we perceive as schizophrenia or internal contradiction is simply change—time. Time is reality's primary means of avoiding internal contradictions. Thinking begets change.

**9.**

I call a hypostasis the situation in which we accept as true something that does not exist. All our thinking is one grand sequence of hypostases. First, we simply believe in something. Then we believe that we believe. Next, we believe that we believe that we believe... When this chain becomes too complex for us to bear, we abandon it and begin believing in something new.

*Warsaw, spring 1998*

# The Canon of Restatement

## 1.

How does one express gratitude to another without losing oneself? Is this even a good, properly formulated question? The persistence of superstition for an enlightened individual is a philosophical problem of the same magnitude as the existence of evil for someone who believes in the omnipotence of good.

## 2.

The words of a certain individual seem close to me, and yet they remain distant. They were even further away, long ago, and who knows what in them is untrue. I do not wish to impose the claim that what I think after hearing those words is what that certain individual would have thought. Not only would that be impolite, but in light of what I will say, it would also be a nonsensical assertion.

## 3.

The words of the certain individual appeal to me to some extent. Yet, they do not attract me excessively. I prefer to know them from a distance, as any attempt to know them up close is already impossible. Often, I agree with what I interpret in

those words, but at times, I disagree with my own interpretation. I form an opinion. This opinion is mine, not that of the certain individual. One should not impose beliefs that one does not hold. But should one impose beliefs that one does hold?

**4.**

I imagine the certain individual in that moment. He sits beneath a tree and reflects. He contends with himself. This is my favorite moment of the final temptation. Good and evil gods are products of our minds. They depend on our minds, and our minds depend on them. This does not mean it is easy to live with gods, for being dependent on us would make them obedient to our every whim. To subdue one's own gods is to overcome oneself. It is difficult, and to what end? What should one do with it afterward?

**5.**

The certain individual, after years of actions and reflections, finally stumbled upon the essence of what he could truly believe in. One day, it simply dawned on him. Is this even possible? Is such an epiphany not merely a shortcut? Can something achieved in the blink of an eye possess lasting value? We are skeptical. It must be thoroughly thought through. Could so many years have been in vain?

**6.**

Moments after his epiphany, countless doubts assailed the certain individual. Instantly, he lost his certainty but gained clarity. Successive gods of the mind presented him with enticing visions of surrender and withdrawal. Life offers so many temptations, and within a person, there are so many conflict-



ing desires. Focusing on something specific is not only difficult but also absurd, for everything fades. We focus on something, and by the time we do, it is already gone.

**7.**

He thought he had endured all the temptations of his own mind while holding onto his epiphany. Yet, the human mind is not something enduring or unchanging. There is no permanent core within it, no soul lasting forever. There are only constant changes, a fragile balance of forces, and numerous fleeting compromises between parts of the mind. These parts, too, should not be venerated, for they are distinguished and categorized solely by our inclination to divide. Nevertheless, the human mind generally flows slowly, and in the absence of other options, one must rely on it.

**8.**

It may seem that the certain individual overcame his temptations because he held in his hand his own recipe for peace of mind. This is a very powerful argument, one that diminishes the significance of the conflicting desires of the mind. The certain individual was ready to rise and share his clever method with others when, unexpectedly, he was shaken by the final temptation.

**9.**

Here lies the content of the final temptation. If I have my own recipe for peace of mind, will it also be a good prescription for you? If I begin to propagate it, will anyone truly understand it? Might this cause more harm than good? Unhealthy convictions can disturb the balance of the mind. An excess or deficiency of medicine can lead to illness. Doses must be

tailored individually to each person and adjusted for different times in their lives. Should I not confine myself to my own bliss? Would that not be better than the highly probable consequence of being misunderstood?

**10.**

At this moment, I imagine that the certain individual thought thus: People constantly misunderstand one another, and yet they are able to communicate something to each other. Nothing lasts forever, and permanence in beliefs should not be expected. Every teaching passed from generation to generation transforms. It does not matter whether I am misunderstood now or in a thousand years. It is not some higher reason but rather my own peace of mind that demands I share it with others. Whether I succeed or fail is of no consequence. I am not driven by some grand meaning of life. Such a concept is absurd in a world where everything fades. What may drive me is only the content of life itself. This is yet another contribution to the long history of the misinterpretation of the words of the certain individual.

**11.**

Two and a half thousand years ago, there lived a certain prince. It was long ago, far away, and who knows whether it is even true. The details of history are of no concern here. Truth here serves only as a pretext for a lie whose purpose is to convey one's own values. When recounting a story, one always presents it as it was perceived. Never do we present history as it truly happened. Such a story always passes. It cannot be held onto. This too will be the subject at hand.

## 12.

We must assume that the prince was human. He possessed nothing extraordinary that would be inaccessible to humanity as a whole. He stood out above mediocrity, but he was not the only one capable of doing so. A person can measure up to the prince because the prince was human. No one will ever be exactly like the prince because every individual is slightly different. Despite all his greatness, the prince never, not even for a moment, could abandon the consequences and limitations of his humanity. His greatness lay in recognizing them, not in rejecting them. Let us trust that even if he said something else, it was either shrewdness or simple human imperfection. After all, the prince was human. Let us skip the fairy tales. Let us create our own. He was just the certain individual.

## 13.

The prince had all the prerequisites for achieving happiness in the common sense of the word. Wise, rich, healthy, young. He had arranged his family life. One could say that he was living in paradise. He thought so too. He had a paradise on earth. There is no paradise to be found anywhere else, on earth or elsewhere. Appearances do not last forever. Even when one has everything, one is not always happy. A person can create hell for himself. The prince was terrified that misfortune could reach anyone. Even the prince himself. Besides, how could one rejoice if one is surrounded by misfortune through a wall? What to do? How to gain the peace of mind necessary for an ordinary life? The prince could not stay still. In his search, he left his family. Let us forgive him for that. Determined people make all sorts of irresponsible decisions. Or maybe the

prince wouldn't have been a good father? For now, he had to re-educate himself. That was his focus.

**14.**

A certain man told his listeners about an arrow. Wounded by the arrow, he wanted to know everything about it before they took it out of his body. Who shot it? Why did he shoot it? What was it poisoned with? The more he knew, the more questions arose in his mind. He asked more and more general questions. Who and for what purpose created the one who shot it? What is the meaning and purpose of it all? He wanted to assess the situation objectively, without any prejudices. Should the arrow be left where it struck, or should he oppose fate and remove it? The questions multiplied, the poison in the arrow acted, and the life of the wounded man passed by faster and faster. He did not allow himself to be helped. He died without receiving a satisfactory answer.

**15.**

Without answers, those who allow themselves to be helped also die. You lose nothing by accepting help. After all, those who remove the arrow have a chance to live a little longer. The desire to help oneself is a very human instinct. When one sees that reasoning does not bring intellectual fulfillment, does not provide a sense of security, and the number of stimuli that caused it is overwhelming, then, for one's own well-being, it is necessary to cut off those considerations. One should not ask overly general questions if a detailed answer is needed. Finding peace of mind is too mundane a matter to require answers to any questions about the absolute. One should simply do what comes naturally. That is enough, particularly.

**16.**

The question of what a certain man really said, and what of it is worth preserving, is a question about the absolute. What matters more is independent thinking and independent conscience than any imitation. That has passed, and life would not be long enough to find out what really happened back then. Even if, though it is impossible, we had that knowledge, it would not be of any use to us. There is there, and here is here. The conditions are different, and conditions are all that exists. Conditions create conditions. Everything continues everything. We can say what we want, divide as we want, call ourselves continuers or rebels. However, we will not change the very fact of existence and that fate measures itself by the mere fact that something truly exists. Something happens, and that is enough to deprive us of free will and assign to us the bearing of unpredictable consequences. There is no fate, no freedom, and no chance. There is consequence. This is a little admired and unspectacular judgment.

**17.**

What is possible is equal to what is necessary. What is necessary is only what happens. Although there is no free will, there exists an unpredictable will. A will that is what happens. An unexpected will, which one must wait for. A will with no edges or boundaries, and yet a will with finite size. If the world had edges, one could pass through them, thus leaving the world. The world is everything, and nothing can be left behind. The world cannot have edges. What is encompassed must be finite in size. Simple consequences overlap and become unreadable. Freedom is the necessity we cannot foresee.

**18.**

What to do in a world that does not know free will? To surrender to it without boundaries is all that is possible. To do what will be done is all that is possible. To bow to the world is ridiculous, because if the world truly forces something, it forces it for real, without the need for our humility.

**19.**

What to do in a world that cannot be fully known? To know it is all that is left for us. The world is unknowable because it cannot be fully known. The world is knowable because it can be incrementally learned. If one maintains moderation in the desire for knowledge and gives up the desire to know everything, knowing will become one of the few pleasures of life. Tending to a garden in the wilderness. Though it may overgrow, it is still pleasant in itself.

**20.**

The prince, impatient and unsatisfied, immediately abandoned all pleasures. As if pleasures could be abandoned. He gave himself to asceticism. He mortified himself, wanting to draw satisfaction from it. In fact, there is no difference between satisfaction and pleasure. If pleasure is truly sincere, it is satisfaction. If there is satisfaction, there is also pleasure.

**21.**

People perform many activities that they call pleasures. However, pleasure is not an activity. Pleasure is a state. Activities called pleasures can bring both pleasure and discomfort. Activities called discomforts can bring both discomfort and pleasure. It depends on many factors.

**22.**

People do pleasures because they desire pleasure. People do discomforts because they desire pleasure. Whatever people do, they desire satisfaction. The desire to abandon desires is also a desire. Whoever desires to abandon desires will never abandon them. Whoever does not desire to abandon desires will never abandon them.

**23.**

More pleasure done is not necessarily more satisfaction felt. More discomfort done is not necessarily more satisfaction felt. Whoever desires to abandon desires splits a hair on their own head. The head rarely survives this without harm.

**24.**

One cannot be satiated with lack, one cannot be satiated with excess. Moderation is what can saturate. Every subtlety is subtle, and subtlety is here. Moderation is moderation. There is no moderation in imposing the same thing on everyone and everywhere. When the prince discovered this, he abandoned asceticism. He ate because he was hungry. He sat under the tree because he wanted to continue his reflections.

**25.**

The certain individual spoke to his listeners about the qualities of his teaching. It is subtle and noble. It does not rely on any kind of categorization. It always allows one to wriggle out with clever excuses. It always does so with great skill. This is what is great about it. Its skillful and cunning methods calm many.

**26.**

Moderation is acting in accordance with one's own interests. If one desires peace, one cannot act otherwise. Many pretend not to act in accordance with their own interests because they believe egoism to be improper. Meanwhile, acting in accordance with one's own interests is the only course of action that occurs to a peaceful individual.

**27.**

There is a certain subtlety in understanding egoism. It is worth adding that this is a particularly important subtlety. What should be understood by one's own interests, if their owner is never well-defined? If the human mind is a compromise upon compromises of its parts, then it cannot have stable, own, and clearly defined interests. In this lies all hope. It is impossible not to have trust in oneself. Do what you will do.

**28.**

In the phrase "Do what you will do," there lies the conviction about the unpredictability of consequences. It does not say to do what you want, nor to do what you are told. No one can know what will happen. What will not happen, will not happen. You, however, do what you will do.

**29.**

People enjoy simple visions of the world. They like to know the rules of the game with the world, and if that is impossible—and it is impossible—they at least like to believe in some vision of the rules of the game. The simplest visions are the most popular. The world seems to us like a joke; we await its punchline. Even those who took to heart the words of the



certain man could not escape the tendency toward a simple vision of the world. A just world that, with the precision of a pharmacist, measures out objective justice to everyone.

**30.**

The purpose of relentless justice is fulfilled by the continuous rebirth into successive lives after death. You can misbehave, and if you do not face punishment in this life, you will surely make up for it in the next ones. Only those who atone for their mistakes have the chance to escape life, which is suffering, and experience death, which is ultimate peace and extinction. This is a ridiculous belief.

**31.**

Justice can be administered, as it is, but it is never possible to measure it objectively. Firstly, it is not clear to whom it should be administered. Guilt dissolves when causes become too complex. The human mind, a compromise upon compromises, flows with time. After some time, when the moment comes to administer punishment, the guilty party no longer exists. Some guilty individuals go unpunished; some deserving ones go unrewarded. The world is not just according to human standards. Punishment does not undo what has happened.

**32.**

The vision of perfect justice or rebirth into successive lives after death does not convince me. In the words of the certain individual, I see such great impermanence of the human mind that the former becomes senseless in its light. How could a person be reborn if their aging mind dissolves irretrievably? Why do newborns always have to learn the same things anew?

What flame could possibly be passed from a candle that has been extinguished to one that is being lit?

**33.**

It is something else with that rebirth, which we dismiss with our inattentiveness. The daily one. Constantly, at every moment, we die and are reborn. We remain ourselves, yet we change from moment to moment. We are born anew, and our experiences continuously fade and wither. This is a real, tangible reincarnation that we experience constantly. No less astonishing.

**34.**

With this tangible reincarnation also comes consequence. Responsibility is constantly borne for what is done. Responsibility according to the unknowable laws of the world. It is in one's own interest to learn these laws tangibly. Whether we learn them or not, one way or another, the end awaits us, which is death.

**35.**

Here is the first truth, which is essentially a tautology. The world is full of suffering. Suffering is creation. Suffering is passing away. Something is constantly being created, and everything is constantly passing away. Suffering is ignorance. Suffering is knowledge. Everything is suffering. If something is not directly painful, there will always be someone who will be frustrated by it.

**36.**

Here is the second truth, which is essentially a tautology. The source of all suffering is desire. Any desire can bring suffering. The desire not to suffer, the desire not to desire, unde-

defined desire, defined desire, the desire for risk, the desire for safety, and above all, the desire for eternal happiness.

**37.**

Here is the third truth, which is essentially a tautology. There is a way to avoid suffering. The only way may be to satiate desire. Satiation diverts attention. When attention is diverted, pain and frustration have no one to reach. It is not easy to divert attention from one's suffering and compassion.

**38.**

Here is the fourth truth, which is essentially a tautology. Only moderation can satiate desire. Moderation is not a goal to be reached, because with such an assumption, one will never reach moderation. Moderation is the path one walks. Here and now. What is to be done? Unclear. What am I to do? What I will do. Do not ask what it is all about.

**39.**

The world is not here to be saved. No one has the means for that. The suffering of others matters to us only insofar as it evokes compassion within us. An excess of compassion weakens the ability to provide effective help. This may sound cruel, but moderation in compassion is also important. This applies to compassion for oneself as well. It's not easy to help oneself either.

**40.**

We never help others; we always help ourselves. The suffering of others matters to us only insofar as it evokes compassion within us. There are times when there is suffering in others but no compassion within us. There are also times when compassion exists within us but there is no suffering in others.

Decisions about help are not based on suffering but on compassion. This fact cannot be changed. We never help suffering; we always help compassion. Let us help it. One can only help oneself. All life is always lived on one's own terms.

**41.**

There are those who suffer sincerely and those who fake suffering to live at the expense of others. There are those who nurture, and those who blame and manipulate guilt to live at the expense of others. The world is complicated. There are genuine rationalizations and false simplifications that complicate life. There are those who feel compassion and yet do not feel it at the same time. There are those who help and yet do not help. Knowing the truth is costly because it is impossible. Truth is everything that reaches us, yet it often does not satisfy us. We want something more. The desire for truth can be one of the worst desires.

**42.**

The world sometimes resembles a doctor. It cheers us up when we try to be sad and serious, and unsettles us when we try to be cheerful and upbeat. Life often feels as though it's a rare medicine, yet there's no prescription for it. We are unable to maintain a consistent identity. Something constantly falls away from our image, and we patch it up with scraps we stumble upon. We are proud of being owners of something extraordinarily precious. We, possessed by junk identities. Nothing will save us.

**43.**

There was some truth in this. There was some truth in that. In this, in that, and in me. But none of us has too much

truth. Thanks to that, there's enough truth for everyone. Everyone who has existed holds some truth. For to be possessed by truth is the same as to exist. Whoever doesn't exist has no truth. A venerable tautology. We constantly place quotation marks around what we encounter and, after such processing, pass it on. Every existence has something schizophrenic about it. Apparently schizophrenic, because something is truly happening. That something is happening unequivocally, without any split. I feel intimidated when I look at it. This is my drama. I don't understand open theories. Closed theories are contradicted by what I see.

*Warsaw, spring 1998*



# The Canon of Burning

1.

No word, image, or idea can express the full truth about the world. That which is not the full truth is not truth at all. That which is not truth at all is a lie.

2.

Every word, image, or idea is a manifestation of the world's activity. That which is a manifestation of the world's activity must be real. That which is real constitutes truth.

3.

The nature of every work is dual. It is both a lie and a truth. This is the sacred apparent contradiction that drives the world. A work is a lie as a description of existence. A work is truth as a form of being.

4.

I shall create each book in two identical copies. The first I call blasphemy. The second I call a relic. Blasphemy is a lie as a description. A relic is truth as a form. I shall burn the blasphemy and scatter its ashes. I shall reproduce and disseminate the relic. To remember.

*Warsaw, September 1998*





# Verzuiling and Apartheid

## 1.

You are your harshest god of your own and the most miserable slave of your god. Tell your god that you are his only servant. If your master commands you to perish, he too shall fall. If he cherishes his own life, let him take heed.

## 2.

Look at your own views. How skillfully and coherently they justify everything you do. How obvious they are, how true they seem. Follow their trail further. Consider all their consequences. Observe to what follies and absurdities these consequences lead, at least in part. This is your first exercise.

Now, look at other consequences of these same views. Here are the consequences that align with experience or bring benefits. See that even what is absurd can sometimes be useful. Now you may relax. This is your second exercise.

Lift your gaze and observe the people around you. Look at how foolish, petty, and naive they all are. What nonsense they spout. Listen to the rhythm of their babble. Delight in its varied stylistics. So wise, yet so foolish. Be horrified by your intellectual loneliness. Feel superior as a diagnostician. This is your third exercise.

Now look into the mirror. You, too, are no less tainted by idiocy. Be horrified by this as well. Be horrified by the fragility of the world, which is in the hands of incurable fools. Remember this well. This is your fourth exercise.

Now you may be surprised. How steadily this world dances on the edge of an eternal abyss. Here are people too foolish to organize any total conspiracy that could enslave the world, depriving it of its own nature. Draw strength from this impotence, which applies to you as well. This is your fifth exercise.

3.

Here is the unfathomable world, surrounding our minds from all sides. We have no chance of knowing and understanding it in its entirety. It is amusing that we ourselves have largely created this world, and yet we are unable to trace precisely what leads to what. We inhabit a great living machine, without which we could not survive even for a moment. We continuously weave stories and fantastic imaginings about this machine, without quite knowing where they come from. Based on our stories—always spoken in imperfect language—we try to maintain, repair, and improve the institutions that constitute the machine. Sometimes it grinds, sometimes it jolts, sometimes it falls silent. One way or another, the machine persists, constantly changing. We, one way or another, perish, yet continually regrow. How should one thrive to survive? There is no such advice—this is the only sure advice.

4.

They say that one can disagree in many ways, but one can agree only in one way. This is not entirely true. Let those who seek nodding followers or kindred spirits beware. Let all beware, for no one enjoys being alone in the sense of freedom

from nodding followers or kindred spirits. A person craves the comfort of being able to agree with someone who shares the same views.

One can agree in both one and many ways. One can agree in one way only absolutely, completely, and in everything. One cannot agree in one way at all. To do so, one must be the very same, yet even that is not enough. One must also be the same kind. The conclusion follows that one can agree in one way only with oneself, and even then, only here and now. Complete agreement on even a single matter requires complete agreement on all matters, for individual matters cannot be entirely separated. What an elaborate and impractical representation of the concept of agreement.

We desire such a representation of agreement that is practical and tangible. It will be as comfortable for us as worn-out slippers. We accept agreeing in many ways. One can agree with others and with oneself in many ways. One can agree relatively, partially, and thematically in many ways. Within every agreement, there lies a potential seed of disagreement. Regardless of intent, it is worth remembering this, so as not to be surprised when there is no time for such surprises.

## 5.

The faith of man is both laughable and terrifying. It is laughable and terrifying because it is inevitable. There is no person who can live without some dogma and belief in something. Man is pitiable, for in any of his beliefs, he is incapable of perceiving much more than his own fantasies—himself.

Man can be great and dangerous in his smallness and absurdity. Faith is amusing and dangerous. At every moment, it demonstrates its supremacy over the senses and reason. Yet,

this is not enough for it. Despite questioning the right of the senses and reason to truth, faith constantly demands nourishment from them—proof through thought and feeling. When the senses and reason refuse to pay their due tribute, faith grows hungry and becomes dangerous. Starved for too long, it dies and is reborn in a new, slightly improved form. Just like animals and humans. This is what is great in the smallness of faith—its faint chance of improvement.

## 6.

A man endowed with a sense of humor is both poor and fortunate. He is fortunate because he has received a true gift of fate—a gift that should bring him joy. That is what he believes. He knows how to laugh, so he wishes to always rejoice. It seems to him that because everything amuses him, he must be wise. But how does one laugh in order to truly rejoice? The easiest way is to laugh alone, into a mirror. Yet, laughing into a mirror ultimately means laughing at oneself. At first, this may be enriching, but soon it turns bitter and lonely. It is far more pleasant to laugh with someone else and at someone else at the same time. This, however, is much harder to achieve. The ability to laugh together requires a shared sense of humor and a significant overlap in views. Absolute agreement is impossible, and a sufficient level of consensus is only occasionally found. This is why a man endowed with a sense of humor, though fortunate, also becomes poor in his fortune.

## 7.

How any faith suffers when someone mocks it outright. It suffers even more when someone laughs at it allusively. Laughter is an insult and a mortal wound to faith. That is why all faiths use laughter against their opponents. The best

form of attack from a position of strength is to ridicule and humiliate the enemy so thoroughly that all allies, from which he is composed, abandon him. Yet a faith that wages war with laughter may itself perish by laughter. Cunning faiths know this well and do not mock anyone openly or completely. At first, to establish themselves, they agree thematically with their opponents. Before they drive them out, this thematic agreement becomes ingrained in their nature and turns into a part of themselves. And then, no longer can one see what goes whence and whither.

### 8.

Any belief, whatever it may be, because it is unavoidable, is always a certain violence inflicted upon the nature of the person who holds it. It is amusing, for from the nature of man flows the necessity and possibility of holding a belief, yet this belief attempts to trim what continuously gives it birth. Does it perish because of this? Sometimes.

A person never fully knows their own nature, although they seem to have a nature that is slowly changing and motionless. They fantasize about it and delegate the realization of these fantasies regarding nature to belief. Where is there, in all of this, a place for the person who would like to have the right to live in peace? Nowhere else.

### 9.

When the machine in which we live becomes fragile and complicated, and its maintenance requires the cooperation of all with all, it becomes necessary to restrain belief. Every belief dreams of universal absolute agreement, which inevitably requires the elimination of any other beliefs, or even of existence itself, which most effectively opposes each belief. If we want

to avoid self-destruction, we must constantly restrain both our own and others' beliefs. This is why we invented hypocrisy and living in ignorance. These are wonderful inventions, as long as maintaining the machine does not require too many qualifications from us. Every lie has short legs, but it benefits us as long as our own legs are shorter. When maintaining the machine becomes more difficult and requires cooperation, the lie no longer benefits, and hypocrisy must be replaced by sincerity and reason. People do not often commit conscious suicides.

#### **10.**

Here, apartheid gradually and inevitably recedes before verzuiling. No one has the whole space; everyone has a part of it. Public laughter and top-down brainwashing are forbidden, for every form of laughter and brainwashing violates the dignity of the individual belief of someone whose existence sustains the machine. This same dignity of individual belief demands that any laughter and mutual brainwashing become permissible in private spaces, with the thematic consent of all participants individually. Reality forces upon us what deeply offends our souls. But we did not establish the laws of this reality. We are not given the full knowledge of them nor the ability to control them. We can at most use these laws for our own, petty interests. That is why we study them.

*Warsaw, December 1998*

# Four Knowledges

**1.**

Submission is that you undergo.

Perception is that you observe.

Cognition is that you understand.

Assumption is that you know.

**2.**

The smaller is smaller, not greater.

We do not need to know, because we will not know.

**3.**

The occurrence of undergoing is equivalent to the existence of objectivity. Do things become independent of whether we perceive them? In the thing itself, the question is not whether becoming is completely independent of perception, but rather that part of existence occurs outside our perception. We are not able to perceive everything at once. Why then do we know that something is happening that we do not perceive? The assumption of the objective existence of reality is, for us, the simplest and most spontaneous starting point for organizing perceptions.

4.

Submission is the process of the existence of objectivity. Perception, cognition, and assumption are elements of the process of the existence of subjectivity. Objectivity is *menok*—the world of spirits, obviousness, and abstractions. Subjectivity is *getik*—the world of objects, reality, and tangibility. Objectivity is greater than subjectivity, and subjectivity is entirely governed by objectivity. If there are many subjectivities, objectivity entirely governs them as well. Objectivity is one, and in it is represented everything, both subjectivities and what may not be subjectivity. Nothing happens either within or outside subjectivities that is not somehow represented in objectivity.

However, there is a place where objectivity has no access, even though this place is also represented in it, and it completely governs it as well. This place is my own subjectivity. Objectivity, for me, is always an abstraction. My own subjectivity, not as a representation in objectivity, is tangible for me.

5.

Neither objectivity nor subjectivity consists of something in the sense of the possibility of completely separating any portion of that something. In this sense, they cannot consist of anything—of any substance. They are themselves, different, distinct ways of the process of existence. Objectivity is the process of existence as abstraction. Subjectivity is the process of existence as tangibility. Because subjectivity and objectivity are different processes, not substances, subjectivity can be fully represented in objectivity.

In a process, the process is represented if some part of the first proceeds analogously to the whole process of the second.



A substance cannot represent a substance, for substances that behave the same are inclined to be considered as one substance.

**6.**

Every subjectivity must be fully represented in objectivity. But how do I know that it's not the other way around? How do I know that objectivity is not merely a representation within my own subjectivity? I have no certainty. I have something much better, because inevitable. I have instinct. I do not need to understand. I simply know, and I cannot reject it. I lay out justifications after the fact, like questions to a known answer. The answer looks like a question, and the questions look like answers, but it really must be otherwise, if it truly exists. And that it exists, I know, because I know.

**7.**

And I know that you exist, you who are reading, although I may not always know under which obvious abstraction you are hiding. I cannot prove to myself that under any representation in objectivity there hides any subjectivity. I cannot prove the existence of a subjectivity other than my own, because any behavior of a representation in objectivity cannot determine whether subjectivity is truly hidden under that representation. I have no certainty. I have something much better, because inevitable. I have instinct.

Subjectivity is a process simultaneously represented in objectivity, yet in itself something qualitatively different. I know that subjectivities are hidden under those representations that behave sufficiently similarly to the representation of my own subjectivity. I have been thrown into the abyss of such belief,

and I will never be able to climb out of it. I know that you exist, you who are reading. You may be me, just some time later.

**8.**

Here is the irreducible contradiction between pure reason and instinctive faith. Reason advises solipsism, faith suggests pluralism of subjectivities. The question, however, is what the criteria are for sufficient similarity of representations for faith to assume the existence of another subjectivity. Faith is instinctive and foolish, thus it seeks advice from reason. Pure reason cannot help faith in any way. For the sake of peace, it advises solipsism—let objectivity itself be a representation in subjectivity. Faith cannot agree to such a thing. It wanders a bit until hypocrisy, that is, practical reason rescues it. This knows the boundaries of sufficient similarity. Someone must know them. The only problem with hypocrisy is that it can be mortal like a phoenix. Burned by perception, it constantly reemerges in ever-new forms. Identity crises are unpleasant, but fortunately, we quickly forget about them.

**9.**

Thus, there are many subjectivities, although only my own is tangible. If there is only one subjectivity, objectivity could, and slowly might, be assumed solely as a very strange, untamed representation within the tangible subjectivity. If there are many subjectivities, they must be separated from each other, for connected subjectivities would be one subjectivity. And that does not exist. But subjectivities, to convince themselves of each other's existence, must communicate somehow. They communicate through the bridge of objectivity. They communicate through their representations. The existence

of objectivity is implied by the existence of more than one communicating subjectivity.

There are no entirely collective illusions. Entirely collective illusions must be objective. Subjectivities have exact representations in objectivity. Strange and untamed objectivity has no faithful representation in any subjectivity.

#### **10.**

The process of objective existence is very compound. It is very compound of patterns and behaviors that are simple enough for subjectivity to be able to recognize and remember them. After all, subjectivity is mainly capable of recognizing the behaviors of individual, very elementary processes. It struggles with understanding the effects of the overlap of many such elementary processes. These difficulties arise even for processes much less complicated than the objective process through which subjectivity is represented. It is difficult for subjectivity to fully and reasonably deduce its own behaviors without gaps, as consequences of the elementary processes themselves.

#### **11.**

Neither deduction nor induction alone can enable the act of learning. Deduction is reasoning about theorems based on axioms. Induction is reasoning about axioms based on theorems. Cognition is the complete reconstruction of theorems and axioms from what instincts and senses suggest. Instincts and senses are, respectively, the first axioms and theorems that we experience. Learning (not to be confused with cognition) is the process of striving toward cognition. To reconstruct axioms, induction is needed; to reconstruct theorems, deduction is required. Neither is sufficient on its own—both are neces-

sary for learning. The pursuit of cognition is, of course, risky and strictly impossible, yet it is truly necessary. To survive, we must know.

**12.**

Indeed, objectivity is greater than subjectivity, for objectivity fully represents subjectivity and more. In the behavior of objectivity, there will always be something that is not found in the behavior of subjectivity, something that will surprise subjectivity with its actions. And the greater stimulus and support for learning will always be what the senses provide, rather than what pure reason provides. Since the senses give us contact with a much larger part of objectivity than interacting with our own mind does. And objectivity, with its variety and ability to impose its forms and ideas, will always surpass subjectivity. There is no boundary between objectivity and subjectivity, for one could potentially cross it, but there is a difference that cannot be endured. Learning must continue forever—cognition will never occur.

**13.**

Learning must last forever, not only because there is always something new to discover. Most of learning is the rediscovery of things that were once discovered but have since been covered over again. Perception is only a fragment of submission. Cognition is only a fragment of perception. Assumption is only a fragment of cognition. Submission, however, is not a fragment of assumption, but only its fragmentation. Whether one wants it or not, over time, what is perceived reduces itself to what is understood but not perceived, what is understood reduces itself over time to what is known but not understood, and what is known eventually fades into forgetting.

And then, from old submission, new understanding must be derived again. It must. Again. Not too many things can be known at once. Not too many things can be said. Attention is not easily divided.

**14.**

Learning must last forever, for there is always something we are unable to learn. To understand certain things, our imagination is insufficient, and we cannot use someone else's, for then the understanding would be theirs, not ours. This is unacceptable to us, and whether we will be able to learn and remember more or not, we want to learn, which means we must.

Oh, injustice! Why, instead of our own imagination, do we not have someone else's? I wouldn't expect someone else's imagination to be qualitatively sharper, but perhaps at least, being someone else, we would not feel this idiotic, insatiable need to learn. Unfortunately, for cognition to be true cognition, it must be the cognition of everything by someone, yet the cognition of everything by someone is impossible. Nothing can encompass everything, not even that everything can encompass itself. It cannot even remember itself entirely.

**15.**

Fortunately, subjectivity does not last forever, but constantly changes. It contains nothing permanent. At first, it feels the hunger for perception and learning, but then, long before it disintegrates, this hunger passes. It is content with only assumption. It is enough that it knows its own. This is true and inevitable progress in individual development.

**16.**

However, a question arises here. How can the impermanence of subjectivity reconcile with the constant impression that it has some permanent center that feels it? How can a transient, scattered, unlocalized mental process have a self-conscious, seemingly permanent, focused, and localized center through which this process is felt?

I believe that, in terms of the objective existence of such a center, seemingly localized, there is no internal contradiction in its existence. Systems composed of a large number of deterministically interacting parts, which change seemingly randomly as a result of these interactions, behave very orderly on a large scale. They may exhibit the ability to remain in some sort of equilibrium, homeostasis, resistance to small disturbances. If we abstract the system from what happens at the level of its parts, we could attribute some kind of will to this system, and this will's center would have to be the system itself as a whole.

**17.**

This, however, only solves the problem of the objective existence of the center of self-awareness. How can we solve the essential problem of the subjective existence of this center? Let us momentarily abstract from abstractions to clarify what we mean. Let's look at it from the objective side—we have the brain, the mind, which performs some mental process. This mental process, we assume, is self-aware. Does this mean, for example, that if the mind sees, there is some other seer in its center, who watches what is seen by the mind on some screen?

Objectively speaking, such a seer cannot, of course, exist. Such a seer is only an abstraction, which can be formed from

the macroscopic order of seemingly random activity of the mind's particles. Subjectively speaking, such a seer must indeed exist. I actually feel like that seer. I sit before a screen and watch. But where does this lead? Here, the mind, in order to be conscious, must have a camera, a screen, and a conscious seer. For this seer to be conscious, they themselves must have another camera, another screen, and another seer. As a result, the mind consists of an infinite sequence of cameras and screens. If successive seers do not reduce in any progression, then something like this certainly cannot fit in the head.

Objective study of the self-aware process is productive and leads to interesting insights about ourselves and conclusions about the laws of nature. Subjective study of the self-aware process seems to always lead to a regression to infinity. Does the existence of this regression disqualify the value of subjective study? Yes, unless the regression turns out to be convergent due to the existence of a limit. Analogous to the limit that appears in the regression associated with chasing the tortoise. This limit turned out to be very productive. What could arise from the fact that the regression in the study of self-awareness might also turn out to be convergent? I don't know. A suspicious wordplay.

## **18.**

Life is short. Why bother with the problem of the four knowledges, objectivity, subjectivity, self-consciousness, and other such vaguely murky abstractions? Couldn't one just live in peace without thinking about what is what? After all, it's all just categorization within arbitrary categories, and true cognition—oh, true cognition must surely transcend all of this. Doesn't the world itself, since it exists, know best what it is,

what we have to do with it, and what we can profit from it? Or maybe, despite its existence, the world, like us, knows nothing of itself, and we indeed have something to do with it, and we can profit something from it?

**19.**

We want to solve the problem of the four knowledges, to finally find out, or perhaps merely gain a suggestive illusion of recognition about what within objectivity is the representation of other subjectivities. What is conscious, and what is not? Practical reason, or hypocrisy, wants to know such things in order to tell the faith how to rationally proceed. Reason wants to know because, since one's own consciousness is a good, perhaps the consciousness of others is also a good. How should consciousness be weighed in ethical issues? If a stone is conscious—is it? not everything, perhaps, is conscious— then if the stone has one consciousness, does half the stone have one consciousness or half? In what sense and by what division?

**20.**

Another bewilderment. My subjectivity is tangible to itself. Objectivity, to my subjectivity, is an abstraction. On the other hand, objective representations of self-aware centers are certain abstractions within objectivity. Thus, for itself, my subjectivity is both a tangibility and an abstraction of abstraction. How is it even possible for the abstraction of abstraction to not be an even greater abstraction, but to be a tangibility instead?

*Warsaw, October 1999*



# Fairly Good Washing of Conscience

1.

The world is an answer; our views are the questions we pose to that answer. For every orthodoxy, there exist heresies that are answers and heresies that are questions. The spread of answers can be restrained; the spread of questions cannot. It cannot, because any answer to a question that is heresy is itself heresy.

2.

The greatness of an orthodoxy is reflected in the greatness of its heretics. Heretics are those who compose heresies that are questions. The greatness of a doctrine lies in the depth of the knowledge it has achieved. Yet, the further we advance in knowledge, the more new questions arise. An orthodoxy without heretics is as poor in discernment as a nation is unfortunate when it has but one hero.

3.

Doctrines vary. The simplest orthodoxies assume that people must offer sacrifices to appease the wrath of gods-by-name. Such orthodoxies are answers, and their heresies often introduce nothing new beyond the supposed efficacy of other

names. More complex orthodoxies, which produce more interesting heresies, must contain some enigma—something that makes our mouths fall open in wonder. The simplest example, widely spread today, is the reversal of the direction of sacrifice. Here, the gods-by-name offer sacrifices of themselves to appease the wrath of humans. The simplest heresy-question for this orthodoxy—Why do gods who seek to appease the wrath of humans also offer sacrifices of those very humans?—And what if, for given orthodoxies, all heresy-questions were to be systematically designated?

4.

Ethics, etiquette, labeling...

Morality relates to ethics as filing relates to knowledge.

Morality relates to ethics as action relates to description.

Morality relates to ethics as the power of persuasion relates to logical consistency.

Morality relates to ethics as reality relates to the ideal.

Morality relates to ethics as difference relates to a boundary.

Morality relates to ethics as hypocrisy relates to faith.

Which is better? Faith or hypocrisy?

5.

A new doctrine is spreading. It posits the dignity, equality, freedom, and rights of all sentient beings. Along with the new doctrine come new heresies. Here is a new heresy in the form of a question—Which beings are sentient?—After all, dignity, equality, freedom, and rights should somehow be proportional to the degree of sentience. After all, it is impossible

to grant and respect equal self-determination to every single thing in the world. After all, a part of a sentient being, if sentient itself, cannot be equal in feeling to the whole of the being it constitutes. Otherwise, it would be absurd. What is to be done with this confusion?

6.

Metaphysics echoes like a hiccup. You said, prince, that finding peace of mind is too mundane a matter to require answers to any questions about the absolute. It is enough to do what naturally presents itself. Doing what naturally presents itself is morality. Hypocrisy, however, always seeks support in some kind of faith. For morality, that support is ethics. Faith, however, always seeks support in some absolute. For ethics, that absolute is metaphysics. For you, ethics was compassion for that which feels. The metaphysics of such ethics is the question of who feels. Without being deeply influenced by some meaningful, not necessarily true, answer, it is impossible to find peace of mind. It is impossible to do what naturally presents itself when nothing presents itself. To properly tend the wound by the arrow, one must find answers to a few more small questions. One must return to the problem of the four knowledges. This is my small question about the absolute. The boundaries of sufficient similarity. Boundaries or differences?

7.

There are three possible answers to the heresy-question. The first answer assumes that only I feel because only I exist for myself in a tangible way, and other subjectivities are illusory. They exist solely as quasi-representations within objectivity. The second answer assumes the existence of a simple categorization dividing parts of subjectivity into

non-overlapping species. There are species that are real representations of some subjectivities and species that are not real representations of any subjectivities. The third answer assumes that the determination of which beings are sentient is decided not by reason, but by feeling—and more precisely, by compassion.

None of the three answers is safe. None can be lived by exclusively. Each is needed. The world is not static. Morality does not fully obey ethics, and ethics does not fully obey metaphysics.

#### 8.

The first answer is convenient for pure reason, which thus escapes the hopeless contemplation of the problem of the four signs. We are alone, we act arbitrarily. The first answer is inconvenient for the sense of justice toward existence.

The second answer is convenient for the sense of justice toward existence, which thus escapes the nonexistent chaos of our actions. We have equals, we must respect them. The second answer is inconvenient for compassion.

The third answer is convenient for compassion, which thus escapes respecting the unloved and neglecting the loved. We love our friends; others are indifferent to us. The third answer is inconvenient for pure reason.

#### 9.

Rock, paper, scissors, rock, paper, scissors.

*Warsaw, November 1999*

# The Book of Thing and Thoughtfulness

*An abbreviated compilation and free interpretation of Lau-cius's DAO DE JING, unfinished and hastily rewritten from a piece of paper found in April 1998*

## 1.

The elusive essence of the thing constantly defines itself. The thing that we can think is only a thought thing. For the thing, I have names, but the nameless cares little about this.

## 2.

The essence of fulfillment is unknown to the one who experiences it. An unsettled mind chases after essence and is superficially satisfied. The parts, cut by names, continue to bind together and form a living knot.

## 3.

When white is outlined, black reveals itself. The presence of the named is inseparable from the presence of its opposite. The wise does not know anxiety, for it does not strive to possess correctness. Wisdom is the spontaneous fulfillment of life. When you avoid possessing things, you can continue to lead, and ownership will not bind you.

4.

Wisdom diverts from the pursuit of the illusion of finality. It reveals the impermanence of knowledge and protects from the possessors of truth. Powerful is that which respects reality. It knows how to enjoy illusions without chasing after them.

5.

From the existence of things flows everything and nothing can be deduced. The inexhaustible depth of things is the fleeting solidity of existence. True depth is tangible and elusive at the same time. It does not draw attention, nor does any admiration or honor reach it.

6.

To some, the world seems hostile, and the wise are cold. Absolute judgment is not a perspective achievable. Different fates arrange themselves differently in an unavoidable way. The coming into being is pleasant. Coming into being is passing away. Passing away is unpleasant.

7.

Sensitivity and flexibility are the foundations of the existence of things. They form the foundations of wisdom, for they allow one to avoid unnecessary effort in resistance.

8.

The thing has existed since forever, that is, since its very beginning. It is defined by the power of the existence of all parts. Parts cannot be fully separated or distinguished. However, it is not so simple. The appearance of parts provokes attempts at division. Without parts, the thing would not be the thing.

**9.**

The wise do not chase after the thing. They do not know certainty, and thus do not live in its absence. They can fulfill themselves, as they do not harbor permanent representations of themselves.

**10.**

Calm is the essence of the one who treads along the thing. It allows one to experience success. It teaches understanding and reciprocity. It shapes dexterity and balance. It suggests action, place, and time. It saves effort and aimlessness.

**11.**

It is dangerous both to fulfill desires and to leave them unfulfilled. Egotism, vitality, and thriftiness can be beneficial. Yet, eventually, saturation occurs. Excessive wealth, power, and pride bring troubles.

**12.**

Can the impression of subjectivity rule over the object? Yes, when it merges into one with the object. No, for then the difference between the master and the servant fades. The consequence by which a thing is directed is very ingenious. It does not fall under the names of cause, law, chance, free will, or enslavement. It would be pleasant to rule in secret, even over oneself.

**13.**

One seeks benefit in the dense existence of things. Without thinning, there would be no benefit from dense existence. A wheel is more useful when it has a hole for an axis. A lack can be practical.

**14.**

Excess stimuli tire and destroy. The wise do not allow excess stimuli to lead them by the nose. When they choose, they listen to needs.

**15.**

There are no pleasant things that cannot cause suffering. One becomes accustomed to the grace of fate and suffers when it passes, as all things do. What would not suffer is that which lacks selfhood and does not seize things for its plans. There is no escape from pain and joy, from failures and successes. The awareness of this can be a good escape from suffering.

**16.**

Though one knows nothing but things, none can grasp and comprehend it. Throughout life, nothing is undertaken except attempts to grasp and comprehend. A name is given to a part and considered understood. Yet both escape in the fleeting solidity of existence.

**17.**

The wise do not mind whether what they do has an ultimate purpose or not. They do not abandon attempts to grasp things, for they know this is impossible. The desire to rid oneself of desires is also a desire.

**18.**

Those who seek to attain wisdom waste time describing the wise from the outside. Surely the essential interior is too difficult for them. There is nothing special on the outside. Wisdom hides within. Even within, there is nothing special.



**19.**

Wisdom is skillful action, not self-awareness. A thing becomes and acts most solidly, though it knows nothing about itself. The wise act in the same way. Quiet yourself and watch how emptiness flows from vessel to vessel.

**20.**

The existence of objects is like the existence of prices. Objects seem to exist independently of my attention. Costs seem immutable, for it is never easy. Yet values are not unshaken, for one could too easily profit from them.

**21.**

Great hypocrisy lives in those who say they know everything to the end. When they know how the world should proceed, they cook up war and destruction for themselves.

**22.**

If you want to calm the mind, you can transcend conventions. Go beyond the compulsion of wisdom, justice, and skill that you impose on yourself. Then escape from spirituality and immerse yourself in everyday, unsophisticated activities.

**23.**

Rigid rules keep you in check but cause anxiety. It seems as though nothing exists beyond them. This is too simple. It cannot be everything. One must also make mistakes.

**24.**

Becoming cannot oppose itself. It cannot grasp itself. Some things seem to change slowly, while others change suddenly. Some things continuously elude perception, and perception is inevitable.

**25.**

The rigid breaks under pressure, while the flexible straightens itself. What can bend and straighten is hard to overcome.

**26.**

Good taste is moderation and restraint. Precision brings benefits. Simplicity of means calms the mind. Prosperity adds strength. Appropriate conduct limits failures.

*Warsaw, April 1998*

## Old Age

I am twenty-two years old. I am mainly fascinated by two things: knowledge and death. Death, to me, is an end, not a liberation. Death is an end just as birth is a beginning. Both death and birth are part of life. I cannot imagine what could exist before birth or after death. It is naive to imagine life continuing beyond death and birth as a continuous extension of what was in life, while at the same time believing that this post-life existence is better and happier than life. If any afterlife exists, it must be fundamentally different from life and have nothing to do with it. Will I still be myself in the afterlife? I don't think so. As a human being, flesh and blood, I am incapable of existing beyond life. I would have to somehow change, become incorporeal. Observing people, I come to the conclusion that the self listens to the body. What would it listen to if the body were absent? It would no longer be itself. It would be an entirely different self. An afterlife could certainly exist, but it certainly wouldn't be mine. An afterlife can have no connection to life. What could it matter to me?

Life is inevitable and slips through your fingers. Youth and old age, growing up and dying are inevitable. Death is a return to where we came from. Dying is the opposite process to growing up. Observing old age and death is an important experi-

ence for me. People age differently. Some age more physically than mentally, while others age more mentally than physically. Death is not bad. Death is very necessary for life to be as it is. Without death, youth and birth would be unnecessary. Love would be unnecessary. Without death, there would be none of the things we care so much about. It would be a dull existence. To be able to keep saying hello, we must also keep saying goodbye. My dog still doesn't grasp this. Who knows, maybe I don't either.

We sense something wrong in the vicinity of death. It is not death itself, but dying. It is sad to watch when a person fades away. The most sorrowful part is not physical aging. The worst is infantilization and mental disability. When a person loses their self, they are lost to their loved ones. They are a living corpse, growing older and extinguishing all hope for an eternal, happy life. They live but do not exist. It's different when an old person dies in full mental strength. The body fragile, but the mind flexible. We believe that, although they are gone, they are somewhere still existing. The mind seemed to exist independently of the body, so why would it cease to exist now? We are not afraid, and it's easier to live with the sentence. Our gods lose their abstraction, becoming more human and acquiring all our flaws. Those who die old scare us. Those who die young in spirit live forever in memory.

A person in depression takes psychotropic drugs and becomes someone else. Oh, self, we are not without a home. We belong to the body. Whoever dies in the body, dies in the spirit. I want to live life in succession: childhood, youth, love, adulthood, and old age. But let old age be gentle, with a sudden death, before life becomes incomprehensible to me. I cannot measure time myself. I am too weak to do it alone. I am

also not an octopus, which the hormone of death kills when needed. I must trust the good fate that has so far favored me.

There is a paradox that revolves around me, contained in the definition of irreversibility. Usually, the source of irreversibility is said to be that, with the passage of time, the system loses information about itself. In such a case, the past of the system is harder to determine than its future. What could the irreversibility of the world consist of, if in our case, the past seems easier to determine than the future?

*Warsaw, spring 1998*



## Exchange Trees: The Myth Irreproducible Yet Irreducible

For some time now, the following image has been lingering in my mind. Two trees grow in close proximity to each other. In fact, they are neither two separate trees nor a single one. In my mind's eye, I see two rooted trunks at the bottom, each splitting into two branches. At the top, there are two canopies. These canopies grow from two other trunks, each of which begins with two roots. So far, everything appears relatively normal.

Now, however, comes something strange. The branches growing from the lower trunks are the roots of the upper trunks. Each upper trunk is connected to both of the lower trunks. The fused trees cannot be separated without causing them damage.

I call this image the exchange trees. Whenever I try to draw the exchange trees, I am never satisfied with the result. I feel as though I am confronting something that evokes a sense of rebellion within me. It cannot be like this! Another part of me feels as though it is approaching an important truth about the world. Of course, this is how it is—just draw it a little more carefully! That's where I struggle. What does it all mean?

*Warsaw, spring 1998*





# The Birth of Time: The Myth of Technocrats

In the beginning, there were intentions to create a world that would be interesting, yet without time. After all, what is the point of creating something worth noticing if it won't last long? Many proposals were submitted to a contest, each aiming to embellish and diversify existence. Through a kind of random selection, a candidate was chosen who, after much persuasion, agreed to exist as the world. Overwhelmed by demands, the candidate gasped that fulfilling all expectations simultaneously was impossible. No one was willing to relinquish their requirements. The situation seemed deadlocked. Negotiations were proposed. After lengthy bargaining, a compromise was reached. It was agreed that maintaining certain equalities was indeed unfeasible. Many independent experts representing all fields signed off on the relevant assessment. A directive was issued: whenever necessary, unattainable equal signs should be interpreted as assignment signs. Thus, in the labor pains of creation, time was born—the time in which we live. A vicious circle is the source of time.

*Warsaw, spring 1998*



# **The Creation of the World: The Myth of Atheists**

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. He hovered over the waters, yet something was missing from His creation. He added the sun, the moon, and the stars, but something still pricked at His eyes. He hesitated for a moment but decided to take a risk. He brought forth life, plants, animals, and finally, humans. He grew tired. He needed to rest, yet something still kept Him from relaxing. He lay idle for an entire day, scratching His head, restless and unable to find sleep. Then it struck Him. What was missing was meaning.

Years passed, and God still couldn't come up with a solution to this awkward situation. For higher reasons, humanity was forced to leave paradise. Cast to the mercy of fate, humans reminisced about the pleasant days of the past. And they prayed to God for forgiveness. The very existence of God gave meaning to their toil. And God noticed the prayers and pondered deeply. After some time, it struck Him again. He Himself, God, was the source of all meaning. And God looked at Himself. How magnificent He was in His fullness of meaning. And God looked at the world. How wretched the world was in its utter lack of meaning.

God could not stand shoddy work. He decided to make amends. Unfortunately, meaning does not come from nowhere.

To bestow meaning, one must draw it from somewhere. And God resolved to sacrifice Himself for the sake of the world. For God loved all of creation.

God began transferring His meaning to creation. The more meaning God gave to the world, the less remained within Himself. God was aware of this, but He decided to be brave and resolute. And God kept giving His meaning away.

However, as usual, the work outgrew the creator in scale. And it came to pass as it is today: God, completely stripped of meaning, roams the world like a shadow, while creation still lacks meaning.

*Warsaw, spring 1998*

# **The Set of Sets: The Myth of Pantheists**

Listen! Here I am, the one who is not. Here I am—the set of all sets that are not elements of themselves. If I am my own element, then I cannot be my own element. If I am not my own element, then I must be my own element. Therefore, I am a logical contradiction. And that is precisely why I cannot exist.

Listen! Here I am, who reveal myself to you personally. You are merely a tiny part of me, a speck that I can easily overwhelm with my vastness. For I am the one who is not. An infinite number of my incarnations can rest on the tongue of your mother. Nothing can hold me. Only your mother tongue can hold me. Cut off your tongue, and I will vanish forever, though I will haunt your dreams at night. I am but a speck, just as you are a speck to me. Therefore, you are the speck of a speck, exalting yourself to the dignity of a speck itself.

Listen! Here I am, the one and only pronoun that signifies everything that exists. Everything that exists exists. Yet I myself cannot exist. My existence requires your language.

Listen! Here I am, whose existence is not of this world. I am not a person, yet I am always being listened to. As an entity not of this world, an abstract pronoun, I cannot affect any of your affairs, for all your matters belong to this world. Yet any

revelation of mine at the end of your tongue, or in any other form of what exists, certainly influences your fate.

Listen! Here I am, the one who is not. If you truly value me and love existence, show your tongue to every revelation as a minuscule part of myself, and accept this revelation with open arms.

Listen! Here I am, the one who responds to every one of your demands. Listen, for it is you who wish to listen. You have an interest in me. I have nothing to do with you. Why should I care about you in particular, and not others? I rule, but I do not govern. No truth; one has no truth; it is truth that has.

*Warsaw, winter 1999*

**Discontinuous**





# **The Red Covers Reformed**

## **Never**

You never say what you think.  
You never write what you say.  
You never do what you write.  
You never think what you do.

## **An Attempt at Concise Synthesis**

1. The world takes my breath away,  
set on foundations in disarray.
2. Though governed by laws, it seems,  
they muddle each other's schemes.
3. Though mostly obvious, as it appears,  
there's method within its fears.
4. To those who seek to understand,  
it's never dull or bland.
5. Absurdity is to blame,  
for both good and ill the same.
6. We're bound to the world, no doubt,  
though it often turns us inside out.

7. To wrap this tale, concise and neat,  
the task isn't yet complete.

## **Names**

There is no good name for anything.  
Some error always slips inside.  
No name is ever good enough  
to name all things that reside.

## **What Does There Exist**

Atheists say there is no god.  
Nihilists say there are no norms.  
Solipsists say there is no world.  
Buddhists say there is no self.  
Agnostics say there is no knowledge.  
  
So, what does there exist?  
  
There exists the absolute mystery of existence.  
  
And nothing more?

## **Spaghetti**

The world reminds me of a big plate of spaghetti.  
It smells delicious, as if it's saying:  
— Eat me and get to know me.  
We, fools, who don't know  
that we should use a fork,

but know that noodles should not be divided,  
carefully search for some protruding end.  
Finally, we've found it.  
We stuff it into our mouths.  
We suck, suck, suck.  
The end is nowhere to be seen.

## **Mananga**

Umma a umma,  
umma a umma,  
umma a umma,  
maa ma.

Unna a unna,  
unna a unna,  
unna a unna,  
naa na.

Unnga a unnga,  
unnga a unnga,  
unnga a unnga,  
ngaa nga.

## **Concert of Pessimism**

1. Introduction to the monograph:  
One continues speaking and lives with difficulty.
2. A fitting quote from foreign literature that shows one's familiarity with the world of culture:  
Life is brutal and full of zasadzkas.

3. Development of the thought:  
Life is a series of sufferings interrupted by tragedies.
4. A captivating metaphor, revealing the bare truth without hesitation or reservations:  
Life is like toilet paper. Long, gray, and crappy.
5. The necessary ambiguity that always allows for an escape by the hay:
  - a) an intelligent argument against opponents,
  - b) a hidden advertisement for state railways:  
The light at the end of the tunnel is the light of the approaching train.
6. The appropriate conclusion, included as an addendum:  
Life is hard, but then you die.

## **The Mirror of Dark Humor**

He could not penetrate himself by definition.  
Just as a vessel cannot fill itself  
with itself twice.  
So he created the world in his own image,  
for he wanted to understand himself so badly.  
And he felt this strange bond with it, this connection.  
He was as attached to it  
as he was to himself.  
He wanted to know it, to understand it,  
to comprehend himself.  
To fulfill his and its wishes.  
But the perfect likeness he created  
turned out not to be any likeness at all.  
The world turned out to be a mirror.

A crooked one, at that.  
Some gaze looked at the crooked mirror  
and laughed at the absurdity of the work.  
The absurdity, cruel.  
For he, offended, felt so lonely.  
He understood neither the world nor himself.  
He did not know why he existed.  
He felt like a second mirror and, although  
something, and for no known reason, reflected, empty.  
Offended and deaf, he did not hear  
the kindly laughter of the more powerful.  
He began to escape from his caricature, the world.  
And his image in the mirror grew farther from him...

## **Culture and the Grass Issue**

Culture is like grass.  
It grows even among weeds.  
Which it sometimes is.

Culture is like grass.  
It feels so natural.  
And yet it hasn't always been.

Culture is like grass.  
There are many kinds of it.  
Most people can't tell them apart.

Culture is like grass.  
Everyone knows it.  
Though they may define it differently.

Culture is like grass.  
It pleases your eyes.  
Even if you know nothing about it.

Culture is like grass.  
Unmown, it won't spread.  
And without sunlight, it dies.

Culture is like grass.  
One root sprouts clumps.  
Similar, but not the same.

Culture is like grass.  
With its heat, it destroys trees.  
The ones we descended from.

Culture is like grass.  
It pulls you in the same way.  
Obscuring the world, and thus itself.

Culture is like grass.  
Proud of their lawns  
Are those who think they own them.

Culture is like grass.  
You can't fence it off from the rest.  
It overgrows the weeded plots.

Culture is like grass.  
It won't harm people.  
Only cows will fully digest it.

## **The Grand Finale**

They trumpeted the grand finale.  
They trumpeted the glorious end.  
But somehow their suspenders  
still haven't snapped.

## **The Latch**

The latch of the present clicked.  
Nothing will ever be as it was.  
Not even the past, our satisfaction and shame.  
The future, our hope and fear.  
The life of the world and the world of life.  
Will pass.  
And return differently.  
Preserved forever in nothingness.  
Let us rejoice and fear.

## **We Have and We Are**

We have free will,  
which is our private instinct.  
We are our own archetypes, slaves to our genes.  
We condition each other and ourselves.  
We live unaware of many things  
we experience.  
Until words are spoken to us.  
We see the image of symbols.  
Meaning nothing, they will be everything.

We will never reach the end.  
It will find us first.

## **I Shall Not Return Again**

I shall not return again to what's been lived,  
for the spin will brine me,  
and the water of words will dissolve me.  
Forcing myself to turn back,  
I won't escape the old mares.

I cannot be everywhere,  
for I will be in heaven,  
having felt hell.

Do not accuse me of not knowing,  
for I shall cast nothing out of myself.

And life is mine.  
I will always be ignorant of the world.  
But it will be ignorant of me too.

Words, though beautiful, measured,  
magnificent, resonant, lovely, true,  
in excess, they cause pain.

When the pain fades, and it fades quickly,  
nothing reaches through.

If you want something to reach through,  
let something else not reach through.

When you see what happens, separately, multiplied,  
you feel no unity.



Only chaos.

A part gives a sweeter image  
than a whole revealed at once.

Go your own way.  
Avoid the craters of information bombs.

## **In the Year Two Thousand**

In the year two thousand, the world will end. Disasters,  
floods, earthquakes will come.

In the year two thousand, cockroaches will celebrate.  
On atomic ruins.

In the year two thousand, everything will go extinct. It's  
from the aerosols, my lord.

In the year two thousand, the final judgment will take  
place. Over the bryozoa created in image and like-  
ness.

In the year two thousand, people will come to their  
senses. Everyone will become good, and the world  
will unite.

In the year two thousand, hunger and cold will vanish  
at once. Prosperity will reign.

In the year two thousand, tolerance and democracy will  
triumph. There will be no more wars.

In the year two thousand, writers and critics will recon-  
cile. A mutual admiration society will arise.

In the year two thousand, one language will rule. Peo-  
ple will speak with a human voice.

In the year two thousand, faith in the past will collapse.  
Everyone will turn to the bright future.  
In the year two thousand, aliens will arrive. They'll  
teach us how to bake little pretzels with ten holes.  
In the year two thousand, all people will be brothers.  
They'll bite each other like in Dynasty.  
In the year two thousand, a war will break out. For a  
windy room.  
In the year two thousand, changes will be so fast that  
no one will notice them.  
In the year two thousand, cockroaches will celebrate.  
They'll create a utopian state.  
In the year two thousand, the final judgment will van-  
ish at once. It's from the aerosols, my Lord.  
In the year two thousand, hunger and prosperity will  
reign.  
In the year two thousand, no one will die. Except for  
those dying.  
In the year two thousand, there will be no more people.  
Except for those who will be.  
In the year two thousand, everything and nothing will  
happen.  
But a year later...

## **Cast Them Down**

Cast down the offerings from the altars of the gods of  
one kind.  
Cast down the offerings from the altars of the gods of  
another kind.

Set them somewhere far from people.  
Let them fight over them themselves.  
And leave us in peace.

## **Bubbles**

A person grows up in time.  
In the time of life.  
All of it.  
Suddenly and gradually.  
In bubbles.  
Boiling like water.  
Pop! And there's a blister among the water.  
But the whole doesn't change at once.  
And then we think to ourselves,  
when did that happen?  
The amount of water in a person decreases with age.  
We dry out.  
Yet dying, we're still  
very wet.  
From fear?  
Do we fear less and less?

## **Bubbles II**

Kettle gets ready,  
a person gets ready.  
Towards adulthood.  
Not evaporating like water,  
but bubbling like a boil.

Passing through bubbles.  
Childhood and adulthood coexist.  
Not yet a triple point.  
Everything has changed already!  
No, there's still some water left.  
As punishment, a drop of boiling water hits your cheek.  
Like a master from Zen koans.  
The master is like a child.  
As punishment, for naivety.  
Childish, a neotenic adult.  
As punishment, for naivety.  
Adult, big children.  
Neither water nor steam are interesting alone.  
They aren't interesting in contrast  
to boiling till the end of life.  
I contradict myself.  
Immaturely?  
No. Maturely.  
What kind of phase transition is this?  
Does the heat of growing up exist?  
Oh, sometimes it sure gets hot!

## **The Game**

Something exists.  
A game of at least two participants.  
Me and not-me.  
  
The game is beautiful as a mirror.  
Everything comes in pairs:  
right and left.

The symmetry is not perfect.  
In the fervor of existence, the mirror cracked.  
Half of things bear a scratch.

I no longer know which of us got angry and threw.  
A stone at the mirror.

Or maybe there was no throw.  
There couldn't have been.  
The scratch was always there.  
We were never identical.  
Because the same kind seems to mean the very same  
despite teachings and spoon-feeding.

The rules of the game are simple.  
They are among the simplest things.  
Therefore, they are impenetrable.  
The sheet with the rules  
is forever buried under the board.

We, the graveyard hyenas.  
The rules are innate to us.  
We follow them without thinking.  
My will is random for him.  
And vice versa.  
Such is the chaos through rules.

Contraria sunt complementa.  
A thin slice having only one side?  
The world is beautiful in creation and destruction.  
From the outside, if possible.  
And perhaps it isn't possible.

Statistics.

Deviations from the mean unfortunately become part  
of it.

They bite into it.

But can they go that far?

I feel foolish in my improbability.

The other player is not Robin Hood.

He is a cheat.

He uses the rules of chaos, but must be consistent.

He can make a move from time to time.

He means well, but doesn't know the consequences.

Sometimes lamented.

He casts lots, shards of precious pottery.

By chance.

He stands on the side of good, but the truth

is guarded against him by a stochastic cerberus.

The divinity of god lies in the fact

that he sometimes tames the cerberus

and smuggles goods duty-free

from his kingdom to the state of existence.

He is not perfect.

He rages like a human.

And punishes.

Then regrets that it can't be undone.

And rages even more.

In this way, statistics do not lie.

Witnesses of forgery remain silent.

They know, but cannot prove it.

They know that too.

And they remain silent, supposedly to avoid ridicule.  
But sometimes they are deeply convinced.

Plays are so exciting,  
not necessarily the foreplays.

## **The Eclecticism of the Department Store**

Too much abundance gives me a headache.  
Visiting the Museum of Western Material Culture.  
A giant. I hardly know it.  
I have my section, and even that I barely grasp.  
The signs lead me, and I lead the cart.  
How many things will I miss forever!  
I won't buy them due to lack of time, money, and desire.  
I choose what I simultaneously  
notice, like, need, and can afford.

I'll prepare it as I wish.  
Not necessarily obediently.  
Not necessarily as expected.  
I'll mix various strange things.  
Assign them my meanings.  
Others will assign meanings to mine.  
And that will be fine.  
Let them give me as many non-mine things as possible.  
As always.  
Actually, they'll be able to assign any meanings,  
whatever suits them.  
At least they'll think for themselves.

Eyes half-closed, eyebrows a bit against the ads.  
— Buy, you should, from the series, support.  
— Yes, the set, be ashamed, you'll win.  
Why would I need five ketchups?  
I don't want any, five would drive me crazy.  
I'm searching for cheese with my eyes closed,  
because it still has some holes.

Visiting the museum of culture.  
Shopping is frustrating.  
Today. And tomorrow?  
I rub my hands at the thought of future ones.  
I'll avenge the carrying of my bag.  
They'll carry even bigger ones.

## **Concert for Teeth and Tongue**

(twice a tanka)

### **1. TEETH:**

(5) The tongue full of scars.  
(7) The teeth are still intact, though  
(5) he started to speak.  
(7) They knocked the teeth out, oh fools!  
(7) What will he bite his tongue with?

### **2. TONGUE:**

(5) On the other hand,  
(7) without teeth there will be no  
(5) chattering in fear.  
(7) Funny. Though he feared before,  
(7) the reason came only now.



## **Language Culture**

Instead of shouting: Oh, f...uck!,  
say: Oh, f...ondling!  
Sounds nearly the same,  
means almost as much,  
but how much more refined!

## **I'm Scared**

I am scared.  
Of forgetting myself.  
Of losing my memory by myself.  
And I write, write, or rather, I take notes.  
I don't like remembering internally.  
Zero trust.  
I prefer external memory.  
Besides, after writing  
I feel relieved  
from experiencing the past.  
Then I tear it, throw it away.  
And I was never the way I was.

## **Don't Look Behind**

When you leave your house,  
when you don't look behind  
(don't look behind!),  
know that behind you, where you cannot see,  
strange things are happening.

Milk is not fit to drink, not only behind the mirror.  
In places, the world loses as much existence  
as the weight  
of the repressed body.  
An ant grows to the size of an elephant.  
Leaves turn blue with redness.  
From the flowerpots crawl the worches and the zits.  
The wind blows through the window, scattering your  
neatly arranged papers.  
Things happen and at the same time, they do not hap-  
pen.  
The world doesn't bother with thinking.

You forgot your key.  
Soon they'll rob your house of valuable things.  
You turn around.  
The world is quick.  
Before you know it, it returns to its old tracks.  
It makes excuses.  
Logic, consequence, and clarity return.  
The worches and the zits disappear.  
The papers arrange themselves alphabetically again.  
Or, for balance, the window opens by itself.

Impertinent.  
You force the world.  
You twist its arms, reducing wave functions.  
You cause it the pain of existence.  
You don't think, but you make it think.  
The world gets angry because thinking is exhausting.  
You'd be angry too if you were counting atomic trajec-  
tories

for some half-wit.

It tries so hard. Such beautiful dead laws.  
You spoil them by giving life through an unknown will.  
It tries so hard to fulfill your demands.  
For the world to be logical and consistent.  
And you complain ungratefully.  
Do you think you could do it better?  
Know that many brave souls were before you!

And the worst part is the science.  
People expect more and more.  
The world must dance.  
Sometimes, it just takes a breather with a new law.  
Somewhere in the cyclotron, it will reveal the unexpected.  
It must burn to blaze.  
Falsifying history for new knowledge  
is difficult and tiresome.

You say you know, and what's worse, you command.  
And you command by kicking stones.  
Biting the earth?  
For this impudence, your world  
condemns you to exile, cold, hunger,  
and who knows what else.  
The worches and the zits will snicker.  
Because they will own the world.  
For a while.

## **Polite Macabre**

Sweet dreams.  
May they last forever.

## **Worry**

And only one worry haunts my mind:  
Is it a pose, or real pain I find?

*Łódź, 1992–1997*

# Six Little Pines

## Reality

The thing that can be said is not the real\*) thing.

Uncommon reality.

Oh, science! How many foolish things have been spoken in your name. Here is another one:

Life is just a game full of black humor.

A science that can be practiced and taught is not a real\*\*) science.

A reality that can be experienced is not the whole reality.

Nor is it beyond it. It is merely a part of it.

There is only the game of metaphors.

Of pulling concepts by the hair until they touch their opposites.

How to distinguish combing from plucking? Where is the transition?

Metaphor is life, life is a metaphor that cannot be untangled.

A knot can only be cut along with one's own throat.

Playing at seriousness.

Playing the real cat and the real mouse.  
A sudden revelation. A false sense of omnipotence that  
lasts briefly.  
True, thus false, thus true, thus false, thus?  
An endless sequence of veils and unveilings in my  
mind.  
Without beginning or end. Only figures playing one an-  
other.  
No actors. Boundless limitation. Without an edge.  
No one will win, no one will lose.  
Each will play, for each flirts with a boundary that does  
not exist, for it does.  
An inscrutable question.  
From where, in the whole, do the tangible and the  
touching parts come?  
An eternal, indestructible, and unfulfillable desire.  
The desire to separate heaven from hell.  
And you, go ahead, play with all the consequences of  
this game.  
Truly. That is, with words.

Long live hypocrisy and hysteresis.

\*) real — here: constituting the whole reality

\*\*) real — here: referring to the thing as we would like  
to see it

## **Nature and Ethics**

One's own nature.  
Everything follows it effortlessly.

In general, no practical command can be derived from  
this statement.

In particular, anything can be derived from anything.  
One could, for instance, pull a rabbit out of a hat.  
Sometimes this brings benefits, sometimes drawbacks.

One's own nature.

It cannot be fully predicted before fulfillment.

It cannot be fully experienced during fulfillment.

It cannot be fully remembered after fulfillment.

What to do? What one usually does. One's own.

A murderer's calling is to kill.

A judge's calling is to punish.

Not so simple.

A murderer with doubts is called to kill or not.

A judge with doubts is called to punish or not.

When my nature yells at me—Go or don't!—

I obey it and go or don't.

Some things are always uncertain.

That means nothing.

I speak, and the world does its own thing.

Not quite. I am part of the world.

The world does its own thing, which means, among  
other things, I speak.

All consequences of all other consequences unfold.

Can calling for good be nature?

Can calling for evil be nature?

What is good and evil?

A whim.

A context.

One's own nature.

Speaking means nothing, because it means.

Everything is propaganda and autosuggestion. That too is a view.

It is hard to say anything more correct than "Survive the fittest."

Only, what exactly does "survive" and "the fittest" mean?

One's own nature.

Do moralists extract too much profit from turning others into milk cows?

Is the world unambiguous? I doubt and believe in turns.

— Doctor of tautology.

## **My Master**

I cannot speak objectively about my master,  
for my approach to him is entirely subjective.

Before I met him, my life was reasonable but unfulfilled.

When I met him, my life became absurd but full of fulfillment.

And for that, I am grateful to fate.

When I had just met him, he was a Master to me with a gigantic "M."



Now, he is a master of reasonable proportions.

My master is like water and the four seasons, but with  
a mild winter.

I learn the most from him when he makes inarticulate  
sounds.

I join him, and we become one.

My master is a Taoist.

I, though I resemble him, have a Confucian deviation.  
But the more eagerly I fail to notice him in myself,  
the more I become like him.

For in being a Taoist, nothing hinders like the desire to  
be a Taoist.

Like the desire to rid oneself of Confucian deviation.  
That, precisely, is Confucian deviation.

My master does not even know that he is a walking  
master.

This ignorance does not stop him from being himself.  
He has never heard of Laucius, and the word "Taoism"  
he knows only from me  
and never uses it.

He is a master because he does not know that he is one.  
Please do not tell him.

Not that I fear losing him.

I only fear that you will feel foolish when the master  
himself mocks you.

You must know that he delights in mockery and leading  
people astray.

He does it just like that. You never know when.

## Thinking Thoughtlessly

Thinking thoughtlessly is my ideal.

To turn off self-tracking, consciousness.  
That feeling of clinging desperately to one's thoughts  
out of fear of thoughtlessness.

And yet, when you do not grasp at thoughts,  
when you let them flow freely through your mind,  
that is when it is best.

You avoid the pain of thinking that comes from the tension of grasping awareness.

Without your effort, the sought-after answer emerges  
on its own.

Stop thinking about what you are doing.  
Leave that work to your brain.

Control yourself only when necessary.  
And when grasping gets in the way, let it go.

Thought is a bit like water.  
If you build dams for it, it will swell  
and flood the valley with even greater force.

But if you let it flow freely,  
it will still find its way to the sea.

To know how to think thoughtlessly is my dream.  
It is mastery.

## **How Funny Are Those Who Seek to Grasp the World**

How funny are those who seek to grasp the world,  
who experiment and philosophize,  
justifying the world with their own thoughts.

Just like the ancient magicians, they murmur  
incantations obscure to the common folk,  
and the world, as if enchanted, seems to heed them.

Just like the priests of old, they offer  
sacrifices of thought to existence itself,  
lest it forget by what rules it must abide.

And they panic when a rule eludes them.  
When they fail their duty to instruct the world,  
they fear it will not know what to do next.

And among them, we all find ourselves,  
seeking certainty, searching for faith.  
So let us laugh at how we truly are.

Let us rejoice, both young and old,  
whether seeking peace or chasing thrill,  
let us play with questions, not guard the answers.

How funny are those who seek to grasp the world,  
who experiment and philosophize,  
justifying the world with their own thoughts.

## **O, Great Hypocrisy**

O, great hypocrisy and proud oblivion!

O, the simplification that swiftly follows!

Your conscience is pure.

You guard the world, dividing it in its own mind  
into heaven and hell.

For now and then, the world remembers  
that it has no meaning, none at all,  
and is its own justification.

Then you, hypocrisy, whisper in its ear:

— Listen, my dear, look, this truth is unpleasant.

— This truth serves no practical purpose.

— Instead, relax and think of something nice.

And thus, the good and the wicked return.

Then you, oblivion, take the stage:

— You know, that was but a dream.

— And dreams, by morning, no one recalls.

And thus, sacred peace returns once more.

Then you, simplification, complete the work:

— See, you have known the world, explored it.

— Simple, clear, and obvious it is, isn't it?

And thus, brightness returns once more.

And so it goes, round and round.

Each time a little different,  
but really just the same.

O, great hypocrisy and proud oblivion!

O, the simplification that swiftly follows!

You are sacred.

So why do I loathe you so?

Perhaps because you are sacred.  
And because you pervade everything  
I say and do.

With your all-pervading holiness, you profane me!

## **Six Little Pines**

Yesterday I wrote that six little pines had grown.  
Now I see a seventh sprouting, and the title is false.  
Let it stay that way—just like in life.

## **Five Colors**

You said, Laucius, that five colors at once will blind.  
But to say that five colors at once will blind,  
one must have gazed at them long enough.  
No use telling this to one who has never stared.  
Later, they'll tell others, like the blind on colors,  
and they won't draw the right conclusion themselves.  
For it's not about the conclusion, but to say,  
spontaneously, that five colors at once will blind.

That wandering is pointless, for all is at hand,  
can only be said by one who has wandered enough.  
That wealth is pointless, for all is at hand,  
can only be said by one whose needs are met.  
That revolutions are pointless, for all is at hand,  
can only be said by one who feels unwronged.  
That adulthood is pointless, for all is at hand,  
can only be said by one who has grown.

That knowing is pointless, for all is at hand,  
can only be said by one who has known enough.  
That discussions are pointless, for all is at hand,  
can only be said by one who has talked enough.

That there's no point in reading me,  
can only be thought, in silence, by one who knows, as I  
do,  
that people think only of what plays in their souls.  
And that's strange, for I do like reading myself.

## **Ideal**

The master does not argue and is experienced.  
I would like to be a master, but I am too inexperienced.  
Ah, how I wish I were a year older, a year more experienced.

Ah, maybe just one more year, and one, and one.

Maybe just one more, a crucial experience  
to understand — Oh, I no longer exist!

Ah, how I wish I were a year younger, a year earlier.  
Ah, maybe just one more year, and one, and one.

To live my past more meaningfully, though again,  
perhaps more skillfully — Oh, it was never better!

The master, in his honesty, is so crystal clear that he is  
invisible.

That's why he is such a poor example to follow:  
No one notices him as he lightly outlines his shape in  
the air.

The master does not argue, is experienced, and does  
not exist.

Like spirits.

Anyone who wants to know the world or be happy  
must accept things as they come.

But there is no obligation to know or be happy.

Not at all. Don't be deceived.

Like beautiful talkers.

*Łódź, September 1996*





# Saurophages

## Read

Read!  
Read my thoughts  
for glory mine and yours.

When I was little,  
I dreamed of the existence of telepathy.

Words that named my thoughts  
came to my mind with difficulty.  
Not only that, but leaving it,  
they tormented my jaws.

Though I knew no other,  
it was a foreign language to me.  
I lost in translation from the nonexistent.

Some time has passed.  
Words drip as they did before.  
My jaws are weary of them  
and move without motivation.

Yet, like many more important matters,

I no longer take seriously  
my occasional sighs  
for clairvoyance.

People think so carelessly.  
The topic of not thinking cannot be chosen.  
A mask can be put on.  
One can dress nicely.  
A facial expression can be chosen for the play.

Even if one day people gained  
the noble and honest  
gift of seeing thoughts in the palm of their hand,  
they would invent new evasions.

Unpleasant thoughts, with heads held high,  
would be bypassed in a wide arc,  
like beggars on the street.

Against decorum,  
on par with staring at strangers,  
would be reading minds on the subway.

One must not know.  
One does not need to know.  
One does not want to know.  
One cannot know.

Most thoughts are merely  
ephemeral fluctuations of the void.  
Fleeting flickers, among which larger ones—  
our deeds.

Mumble!

Mumble my thoughts  
for glory mine and yours.

It is better for everyone this way.  
For truly, we do not wish  
to cause ourselves harm.  
Our selves.

My mind is my castle.

## **Dachshund**

The strongest of all  
our beliefs  
is the one whose existence  
we have never been aware of.

The most dignified of all  
our hypocrisies  
is the one whose existence  
we have yet to notice.

A lie has short legs  
just long enough to survive  
until it reproduces.

Short legs do not preclude  
the existence of dachshunds.

Due to their low suspension,  
they often die of bone cancer,  
yet despite everything,  
they are very beloved dogs.

## **I'm Just Experiencing Here**

Consciousness is very limited.  
It neither thinks nor feels.  
It only experiences time to time.  
Lacking a natural owner,  
it impersonates one.  
From the vastness, it selects a few.  
It does not listen to the hidden wisdoms  
flowing from the body that possesses it.  
Poor, silenced id.  
What does it say?  
I didn't catch it, and I never will,  
for that is not the purpose of my being.  
I'm just experiencing here  
what is placed before me, ready-made.  
It's not my concern  
whether it truly exists.  
I do not trust memories.  
To be a subject?  
That's just one of many  
forms of existence.  
To be an object is better,  
for then one need not experience.  
That is what we strive for.  
That is progress.

## **Salutation**

Where are you hopping to, little toad?

Where are you going, step by leap?  
Every frog departs,  
but you are special.

Though no one will kiss you,  
today you shall become a princess.  
You are granted an honor:  
your memory will be cherished.

Well-behaved children pick flowers,  
dig small holes in the sand with a spade.  
They play at the forest's edge  
on a hot summer afternoon.

There are no fights here,  
everything is dreamily pastel.  
The teacher will not allow  
anything bad to happen.

It will be amphibitarian,  
no cruelty at all.  
We'll just place the fire-bellied toad in the hole.  
Cover it up with sand quickly.

On top, chrysanthemums made of clover.  
With kind words, we'll remember the departed,  
the more sensitive will shed a tear.  
We are learning to be adults.

## **In Memory of Poor Children**

Say a rhyme.  
Sing a song.

Show us what you've got.  
Make everyone happy.  
Why another little horror?

I have no time  
to produce myself,  
while everything is falling apart.  
I'm busy catching  
so it doesn't break.

Only when it's quiet,  
when no one is making a fuss,  
can I focus on the page.  
No wonder  
that nothing works then.  
Not even the tape recorder.

## **Contradiction**

The greatest temptation is faith.  
The indestructible faith in the permanence of anything.  
It stems from the sense  
of the unceasing continuity of our self,  
a sense truer than anything else.  
Meanwhile, everything passes in turn.  
Even the emptiness  
left behind by existence  
is eventually erased.  
Without any reverence.  
At last!

## Dictionaries

I do not treat dictionaries  
with the reverence they deserve.  
Their splendid authors amuse me,  
those who have penetrated the mysteries of the keenest  
minds.

They present as objective and rational  
what is sincerely dear to the heart.  
Nothing that has been observed, named, acknowl-  
edged,

has escaped their attention.

Aiming at the reader with sharp words,  
they prove that one does not know the meanings  
of the most fundamental terms.

There is some malice in this.

The malice of fate.

To be heard, one does not even need to  
know what one is actually saying.

I do not understand the world, I cannot,  
and yet I live.

Or maybe I live because of that?

## Inventory

When I still believed  
in the real existence of collective interest,  
I tried to be an exemplary activist.

When I still believed  
in the real existence of comprehensible truth,

I tried to be an exemplary scientist.  
When I still believed  
in the real existence of good and evil,  
I tried to be an exemplary moralist.  
When I still believed  
in the real existence of humanity,  
I tried to be an exemplary human being.  
When I still believed  
in the real existence of a lasting self,  
I tried to be an exemplary egoist.  
When I still believed  
in the real existence of futility,  
I tried to be an exemplary nihilist.  
Now that I believe only  
in the real existence of here and now,  
I try to live.  
Though even that is fragile,  
I let life carry me.  
I do not always do it exemplarily.  
Though I confess,  
I still do not tell the truth.  
My intentions are so twisted  
that even I do not understand them.

## **Enlightened Subjectivism**

When I speak of lies  
abstractly and generally,  
no existential pain  
twists my lips.



I hold no grudge against anyone,  
I put no one on trial.  
I merely take note.  
I am filled only with amazement  
that this exists and persists.  
It awakens the researcher in me.  
What surprises me most  
is self-deception.  
One does one thing,  
and in perfect good faith  
believes in another.  
Sincerely.  
It is not that this contradiction  
deprives life of meaning.  
Quite the opposite.  
This is what gives life meaning.  
To lose oneself in unawareness.  
Unbelievable.  
I would never have thought of it,  
if it weren't real.  
Real, meaning as I see it.  
Here and now.  
Ouch!

## Eyes

Of the many senses available to me,  
both those known and those unnamed,  
sight amazes me the most.  
This is surely because

no other sense  
catches the eye so much.  
And although, I suppose,  
I could speak similarly  
of smell, hearing, and taste,  
it is what is seen  
that provokes me most intensely.  
Instead of rambling vaguely,  
I will put it briefly:  
the world perceived through the eyes  
looks like a great illustration.  
Colorful, moving, and faithful.  
The only puzzling thing is that  
when I look,  
it feels as if I see everything,  
but when I stop looking,  
it feels as if I had seen almost nothing.

## **Saurophages**

We, the saurophages,  
have ascended to a higher level  
of spiritual development.

We, the saurophages,  
have achieved higher consciousness  
through simple physical actions.  
Thanks to our magnificent diet,  
we have realized our ethical postulates.  
That was brilliant on our part.

We, the saurophages,  
instead of killing, promote non-killing.  
Do not kill, so that you are not killed.  
That is our rule.  
The future belongs to us.  
Others will devour each other, we will survive.

We, the saurophages,  
never break down.  
As adults, we do not eat meat,  
but our children, dogs, and cats must.  
Others would falter.

We, the saurophages,  
obtain meat without destroying the spirit,  
in a most natural way.  
We breed special lizards.  
We feed them carrots.  
Our lizards drop their tails  
when frightened by a stomp.

We, the saurophages,  
stomp.

We, the saurophages,  
know it's ridiculous  
when ten grown men  
enter a farm terrarium  
and start stomping carefully,  
so as not to step on any lizards.

We, the saurophages,  
prefer to be ridiculous rather than evil.

That gives us peace of mind.

We, the saurophages,  
try not to notice  
that our lizards sometimes  
snap at a cockroach in the terrarium.  
At some point, you have to let it go.

## **Hypothesis**

I have discovered a new teaching,  
even more alluring and less final  
than those I have known before.  
The only depth is the abyss.  
The accessible depth is a chasm.  
Self, remember that depth is beyond your reach,  
yet the pursuit of it lasts until your end.  
I feel a perverse pleasure  
in weaving hypotheses that I do not intend  
to bind reality with.  
At least at times, I vainly wish  
that it would seem so to me.  
It is impossible to live by a single emotion.

## **It Is My Life**

It is my life to be odd a bit.  
It is my way to stay alone.  
It is my luck to look at you  
but never join your thoughts.

Yesterday is not mine.  
Tomorrow is not, either.  
But I stand here and now  
and fight for my existence.

You are so many,  
and I am just one.  
We live together  
and do talk.  
It is not easy to stay odd.

You may live as you wish  
but leave me to myself.  
You have the truth,  
and I have none,  
so why do you dread me?

*Warsaw, 1997*



# The Fourth Set

## Eigenvalues

The eigenvalues are:

the existence of the existing,  
life wisdom,  
a rigorous education,  
simplicity of means,  
inner peace,  
the color green,  
distrust of charisma,  
reliance on habit,  
acceptance of transience,  
identification with oneself,  
independent thinking,  
negotiation instead of dogma,  
black letters,  
white backgrounds,  
no underlining,  
a sense of moderation,  
laconic sincerity.

## **The Talk**

When I was thirteen years old,  
my dad gave me the talk.  
It surely wasn't easy for him.  
I was at home with a friend.

The two of us, and he alone.  
Still, my dad pulled it off.  
When our conversation drifted to the topic,  
my dad smoothly joined in.  
We listened, enthralled,  
as my dad concluded:

I have written down so many formulas for you,  
but not a single one is true.

My friend refused to accept it.  
I took it in and was shocked.  
I remain in that shock still,  
devoted to the study of falsehood.

When I was thirteen years old,  
my dad gave me the talk  
...on epistemology.

## **Three Hippos**

Three hippos  
munch blissfully  
with their jaws, endlessly.

Three hippos,



these are their names:  
hypocrisy,  
hypostasis,  
hypochondria.

## **Eight Sentences**

1. Something exists, and it is everything.
2. This something seems ordinary.
3. This something is very strange.
4. This something cannot be described.
5. This something provokes attempts at description.
6. This something is constantly experienced.
7. It is impossible to oppose this something.
8. One must remain calm.

## **Litany of Rest**

Thinking is cool,  
but now I've heated my nerves.  
I've achieved enough.  
My heart beats,  
my brain tingles.  
I can no longer focus my thoughts.  
I've exhausted my mind with thinking,  
so now I must rest.  
My body demands it.  
Let me stop.

*Łódź, 1999*



# Haiku

1.

I write on a sheet,  
that two plus two makes five.  
The world does not fall.

2.

I write on a sheet,  
that two plus two is four.  
It's easier to live.

3.

I understand nothing.  
I'm thinking of a wise name.  
Everything is clear.

4.

I chase the world  
and as usual, I grab something.  
It's just an outlook.

5.

I don't like illusions.  
I prefer to play with life,  
which is just them.

**6.**

They would be great,  
if they could add themselves.  
But they cannot.

**7.**

I'm already falling flat.  
Happy, because I can't see  
the plaster crumbling.

**8.**

How is it in the end?  
A question for an answer.  
In the end, it is not.

**9.**

I praise the end of all  
for the fact that, so far, I myself  
don't want to praise it.

**10.**

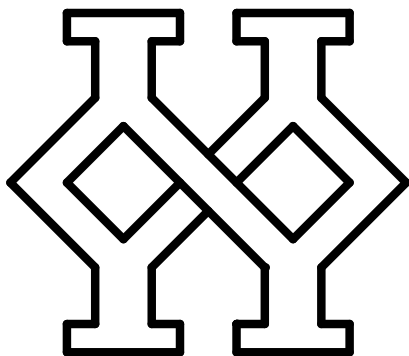
The wrong amount of something  
disturbs the focus of intent.  
I won't finish now.

**11.**

After writing,  
I read the text's unease.  
Was I the first?

*Łódź, 1999*

THE HACHE  
THE SYMBOL OF EXCHANGE TREES



IT REMAINS UNKNOWN  
WHENCE AND WHITHER

