

# MIDNIGHT STRIKE

by Timothy Lavenz  
© 2014

## I

*Will Call*— Upon going to share anything of worth, one is immediately made aware of its limitations. What at first glance radiated all truth appears in the next glance cumbersome and confused. What began in transformative experience becomes caught up in contingencies, mechanical and conceptual errors, failings in language, incoherencies, etc., which we know can only be surmounted by the patient work of clarification and revision. And yet we know there will never be enough time to complete this work of tailoring *on our own...* —What alters this situation considerably is when transformative experience and patient work merge: when they do so right at the surface of the thing to be shared. Then, what's shared is opened: it integrates its desire for perfection right at the level of its imperfectness. And so we become less reluctant to advance, liberated in full to the sharing, for now the thing shared is both *immediate generation* and *steady*

*elaboration*. Each part is a chord sounding complete in itself as well as a chord begging resonance elsewhere. Each part becomes essential to the meaning of the whole, inside and outside the work. The whole, the community of experiences that composes it, remains unformed and incomplete, for the whole only forms in the active engagement of the available parts. Without the present instance of refinement and retuning, without each part being received *in-process*, even up to the instant of reception, the parts cannot be, cannot live. But if they are brought back into the play of the instant, for the being at stake in it; if they are heard and appropriated now, by someone else, then they have a chance to be what they could never have been on their own: an expression of what existence is, when shared.

*Voluminous silence: a hypothesis*—Thought's voices stay quiet, even if raging in tone, screaming with hope or despair. They are the least assured: despite their confident aspect, they feel the pressure, if not the responsibility, to withdraw from the common modes of social discourse, from the form and content of what thought itself says and intends. They feel the need to always reform the form, to refuse it rest in any set signification or social meaning. Despite their brash displays, these quiet voices are reluctant to share their thoughts for fear of finding themselves in the wrong or the inadequate when looking back at all they've shared. Because invariably, at each step, errors are glaring. To risk a thought means: to ensure embarrassment. For any past thought is flawed in light of the current one, and the current one remains underdeveloped. The voices, the tracks they go on, are multiple.

There is no guaranteeing it will add up; in fact it's all but guaranteed it won't. Thus, even the most coherent arguments aren't really arguments but rather experiments, paths, forks and tunnels, potential routes, detours—tests to undergo, truths to try out, errors to suffer. For such presentations, carefully thought out, there can be no choice, once entered, but to “flee”: no choice but to carve out, without them, your own figure.

*Life: articulated*— Idea and articulation are too rigorously interwoven to tell them apart. In truth, idea and articulation demand to be undivided in the text and to be approached accordingly. And yet, nowhere do they go on to make up a unified whole, neither in concept nor in form; both remain exposed to each other in the throw of fragmentation. These fragments gather together *only in imagination*: only in their appropriation at the instant of existing, in the movement of reading, translating, and experiencing always now. Reading as visitation: welcoming, receiving, hosting the idea and the articulation as one's own. Whoever constructs such a text, whoever attempts to articulate such a living idea clearly, is constantly exposed to this very same movement, apparition, and re-visitation – for the idea does not precede the articulation or its own truth as it develops in it. Articulation never anticipates where the idea is headed but gives to the idea its direction, just as the idea gives the articulation its sense.

All that exists then is *this* viewing, *this* presentation, fragmented or portioned out in time and space, in the entering and exiting of the text *as the coming and going of presence itself*. It

never returns upon itself, never creates a “whole,” but remains open in the coming and going of presence and in our experience of this coming and going. For you are only ever able to leave off, to rest exhausted, and rebegin again, knowing that nothing rests, even as you dream. *In the end, what takes place is this ever restless, ever renewed review and rearticulation: the very **event** of existence, offered up to the present **address** of experience.* For there will always be a difference, a different meaning, just as we are always in a different place and time ourselves.

And so it appears: there is no constituted text, no given idea whatsoever outside its present reconstitution in and as life. No present whatsoever outside the present presentation of being to being—of “beings” to “be.” No meaning outside the viewing, the *pact* of this instant, the visitation wherein nothing is gathered, ascertained, or understood, but only given up, experienced, offered, imagined, lived. For a text to weigh up to its own idea, its own thinking, every reading is the “first,” a translation without precedent: the “text” only exists at the intersection of idea and articulation, of life and thought (the intersection of these that presentation *is*); and so only at the intersection of “self” and “other” – or rather, where this difference between us is suspended over the difference between you-and-yourself and myself-and-me. Formula for an absolute restlessness, for divine vitality, for surging, infinite thought, in the sharing of the event of existence, without ever coalescing into “one” existence or into “one” of us, but always the splitting and share between.

The ideal of coherence, continuity, and congruity breaks apart here. We enter into – or rather, find ourselves always already

entered into – the obscurity of *each* in the *other* and of *each outside itself*, with room made in the resultant fissures for a naked listening that splices time onto time, space onto space, part onto part to infinity, which we call “us” and “means something” only in our listening – here, there, neither here nor there, but elevated, turning, replayed, co-hearing: listening in always to the meaning we are and share.

*Efforts all even*— What transpires beneath and beyond the text is its resonance, its ability to transmit itself outside any quick understanding – and perhaps outside of understanding altogether. One vibrates with an idea, within and through the articulation, not to understand it, but to engage it in its vicissitudes, its ins and outs, including its errors. Its only outcome is to grow on you and help us grow. The text reflects the struggle that inspired it, yes, but only insofar as a similar struggle is reflected upon within its viewer. It asks that some similar effort be offered in return, that thinking be reciprocated – though at variance to any imitation. It asks you to craft your own outcome. Without this gesture, the text is incapable of rendering *what it is* to someone else. A chord must be struck inside: that is the mandate of progress in knowledge useful for the highest life. Luckily, the simplest glance by chance will do. Including every glance directed back to life, away from the mirror reflection in the text. The image weaved depends on channeling it one’s own way. That is why every connection is justified, every interpretation authorized, every effort approved – even if one decides to make no effort at all.

*Cop-outs*— To rush through, with an eye to “getting the gist,” ensures that nothing will take place. Then the import of the idea and the life behind its articulation are lost; whereas what matters here are our lives. These words resist all that would tear them apart; but being torn apart by the world already, and by themselves, they can only call out: *noli me frangere*, don’t let me fray apart, don’t let me dissolve. An impossible demand, mimicking what is felt in being torn, turns these tears into challenges. To cop out is to ignore them, to be unwilling to test them out, to eliminate the idea by refusing the articulation, to refuse to think anything through – to ignore nuance when *nuance is all there is*. —Appropriately, the text resists: to “get the gist” is, quite simply, to make sure it doesn’t exist.

*Impossible exchange*— Discourse as *conversation* calls for time, and a healthy one implies an infinite array of intensities, pauses, delays, misunderstandings, insights, nuances – and absences. It requires that its participants be willing to risk *their* idea, the life of their idea, at the limit of their own thinking; and to accept, in the instant, the burden of their own unthought. This is the promise of those who enter the conversation: they will convert if necessary, they are open to being *turned* – turn toward *the other*, in *another* direction. Positions are advanced, risked, taken back, altered, along with all respective “subject positions.” There is no worry that reversals and contradictions will be frowned upon, rather, they are welcomed. Every discursive group, reading or communicating with thousands of others, feeds off the impasses reached in the discussion; without them the very source of their shared meaning

dries up. A certain degree of discomfort is required of the participants, a willingness to experiment, to try out strategies hardly guaranteed – and to accept truths even if they are humiliating. However, in conversation there is no victor or failure: what is important is the running, the back and forth, the tracks made along the way. What is important is the *impossible exchange*: there need be no destination, goal, or outcome, but only this exchange circling around the impossibilities discovered along the way – the impossibility of summation, representation, conclusion, cessation. The most valuable consensus is to consent to converse in such a way: to agree to talk openly without reservations, never to decide "once and for all," to allow the conversation to run its course on a permanent detour, and to suffer the thorns its truth sends our way of experience. And, of course, to thank each other along the way, for our shared territory has to do not with agreement but with *an acceptance of our own blindness*, of the limits on our own perspectives, and the shared acknowledgement that the only possible way "past" this perspective-blindness is to let ours get mixed up with others: to learn. *Conversation* is the clearing where each perspective develops its own foggy horizons, not confused with the others but sharing its development and its space with them, and so "giving voice" to similarities of experience (of finitude, life, freedom). The more idiomatic and enigmatic the voices shared strive to be, the more those who share them have to say. And so, slowed down, differences engage. Only in the play of nuances does one discover the *reason* for the discussion in the first place. If one listens long

enough, one might even find one's own voice, that precious fruit of discourse making the conversation grow ever more miraculous.

*Limbo link*— A careful approach to words views them as problems, question marks, not simply tools for transparent communication. Words are never what they say they are. They do not mark solid points of reference or knowledge; rather, points of ignorance and uncertainty. Unstable points of relay, signs of primordial trust in our connectivity, yet they are blind, as evidenced in words like "despair," "anxiety," and "panic," which are always used suddenly, momentarily, idiosyncratically, without our really grasping adequately what is said. Such words take us to the limit of our own speech and show us our blindness, even with regard to what we feel and are. We must keep in mind this suspension between being and the letter. Words are overburdened when we force them to mean too much. Far too often, the cut-and-dried realities we believe are "out there" are simply the result of a nightmare of assumptions, misguided wants and concepts we do not know how to shake ourselves free of, or simply do not want to try. Our vocabulary continually oppresses us. It's not a matter of escaping this oppression of language's denotative function, but of becoming aware of it and of the *ambiguity* it impresses upon our speech – an ambiguity we can use to think beyond what's been. It's a matter, each time, of posing ourselves as *questions* in this ambiguity, right at the limit of what language can and cannot put together.

*All clear*— Every proposition comes to nil, and we do ourselves a disservice when we forget the element of absurdity that tags along

with everything we say and do. Lightheartedness, an ability to laugh at the rapidity of our own ideas, is an absolute necessity. If we do not recognize the contingency of our process, we make it impossible to find what is truly necessary about it. To take a debate too seriously degrades its process, forcing perspectives to solidify and pit themselves against each other, stifling the very reason for the conversation: to affect and change all involved. For the fact that it all "comes to nil" does not exclude the need to discuss and think passionately – it amplifies it. For the stakes are never higher than when the stakes cannot be met, assuming we have the courage to pursue them. And yet, simultaneously, we hold firm to the lightness of our engagements to avoid ostracizing others and to ensure a critical distance from our own "perspective." For there is nothing threatening about a change of heart – that is precise what the movement of our thought is meant to effect, to the point where we see ourselves as this change itself – as chance, as potentiality. Once we see we are "becoming-otherwise," then whatever point we might have, whatever we might think we are, becomes laughable, altered already. Anything becomes possible.

*Free up your signifiers!*— One of the worst things you can do to your language – and so to your mind – is to believe that a word always means (or has ever meant) the same thing. Take the best example: God. We would like to think that the word "God" always and without fail points to, refers to, or puts us in contact with the same thing, the same signified: in this case, the Ultimate, the unchangeable Being, the One. Doing this, we delimit "God" in a way that robs the word of its potency and flexibility. It freezes

God's toes, hardens his ligaments, gives him a dizzying migraine, makes him stall. Whereas a word (along with its concept) ought to be set free from these previous contexts, from the set relationship between signifier and signified. Perhaps we even have to learn that signifier and signified *do not relate to each other*, are of different orders altogether. Only once we are aware of this lack of relation can we touch the essence of language, the creative reason for it. Besides, who doesn't know that each time we say "God" we aren't referring to God knows what, but to everything living and dead: to the whole mineral, vegetative, and animal world, to the interconnectivity of things, to the limitlessness of life and mind, to chance... but also to the impossibility of having *any definitive clue* as to what we're saying when we "refer" to these things, when we "name" God... and so we are really referring to *an unknown that one feels exceeding itself right there on the spot*, which makes one feel oneself exceeding oneself as "that which is greater than anything that can be thought"... which stretches *thought* to its limits and transports language, our entire body and soul, with it. "God": the word erupts on our tongue unintended, without our needing to know what is meant. Indeed, we refuse to let it mean anything at all... —Let us simply recall then that the same thing holds for all words. That tree, that blizzard, that peak, that boy or girl— always, each time unique, even if apparently "the same." It is as if every word that touched us had to remain a shifter, unsure, mutating, slipping into future references, signs, places. —So free up your signifiers, free up your mind. You will be surprised by how many meaningful things are left to say.

## II

### *Towards a New Approach*

How to read the text of philosophy after philosophy has “ended” and announced this very end? How to read a text – or a world? How to approach our own thinking, our own world, our own text?

The end of philosophy means the end of conceptuality. This implies a different orientation toward language, life, and world. It means that any discourse that signifies, intends, codifies, interprets, deciphers, explains, prescribes, comments, will soon reach its “descriptive” limit. New modes of discourse must be discovered that do more than describe reality or one of its facets – styles of philosophy that *are* before they represent. These new modes would aim less at signifying than at *manifesting* their world. They would open a world rather than explaining one, share a thought rather than advocating for one. Philosophy modifies its aims in light of its awareness of the trembling of signifiers— which is equally the trembling of the world and of the world in our thought. The signifier has lost its clout. Its inherent inconsistency has been

exposed, and with it went its argumentative and explanatory duties. Beneath words, the abyss of being opens an incessant “sliding,” a reality that can’t be halted, which exceeds all conceptuality – in excess of meaning and of being itself.

The *exhaustion of signification* demands that we take a different tack towards the intentionality of texts. These intentions are incommensurably plural and challenge the very notion of intentions. A text that no longer aims to talk about but *to be* its world and idea is marked by irreconcilable differences from within itself, a series of *convergences without coincidence*. This is not only due to the fact that each model of thinking, each thought-experiment, is singular and incomparable to others that stand in close proximity to it. *What dictates this exhaustion is primarily the agitation – whose magnetic centers are self, world, other, and letter – that is the originary condition of signification*. The link between being and letter is always re-tested. That test is the test of truth, of what in the gap of the present still applies to the truth (life, idea, articulation) that is underway. Insofar as intention proceeds from a complex interweaving of thought, world, life, language, objects, and other, when the solid links connecting these come unhinged, so does the self of intention. “Truth is the death of intention,” as Walter Benjamin wrote. To be pulled in all these directions – pulled to each not knowing which is which – is the predicament of self(-expression) at the end of philosophy. It calls for a new praxis which leaves behind good conscience, every will, agreement, and settled interpretation. This new praxis opens the circle – hermeneutic and vicious. What matters are the lives

affected, not the mess of platitudes that dot the thoughtscape making certain effects possible at the limit of significance.

What approach will make us contemporary with the shockwave that bars all this, this mutation in the meaning of meaning, recognizable in every discursive area? From derivative markets to political representatives to advertising plots, a failure to refer to reality, to accept a shared concept of reality, is increasingly evident. This failure of referral demands a twisted thought of reality – namely, of reality now *to the extent that it cannot be referred to*. It is as if every attempt to refer to reality only conjured something unreal, something virtual and simulated; and so the only way to refer to it is to refer elsewhere, *differently* – to disclose references such that they open out beyond themselves. It becomes impossible to verify reality, now in constant disagreement with itself. The meaning of one’s situation is suspended *in toto*. “One” fractures into pieces and makes a deception of every reference. Each points to its outside, its limit, its failure. —How to laugh at this instead of being the butt of the joke? How to be happy?

At the very least, we must stop interpreting and arrest the all-consuming desire to *produce* meaning and meaningfulness. This in no way implies a will to meaninglessness. On the contrary, it means thinking this: *we are meaning*. “*Thereness*” *itself is the mystical*. No need to make, conjure, invent, direct, conduct, or impose meaning. It is not added on to the world any more than it develops progressively over time. Meaning opens up right where we are – where *the infinite vertical of sense intersects the finite*

*horizontal of what is.* It opens us up to what is right here: the opening of finite. The figure of this opening is every other, any other, all others. Each is an exposure to the meaning that comes. This understanding we have, *we are*, each time, simply by being. It needn't be transcribed into writing except to make it explicit, to share in a common revelation. While there is no thematizing it, it opens up the originary space for all themes. To come into contact with this point, this field, this neutrality, is the "task of thinking." At its deepest level, there is nothing to be learned, save perhaps for this: that to learn is to live, *to go on being exposed* – to oneself, to others, the world, and to all that is in us and in it.

Each instant of meaning is the instant itself – the instant it collapses. We should not be so alarmed when all meaning slips away. On the contrary, we should endure it without trying to mask over it, without making our suffering *refer* to a higher plan or project. *Access to the meaning of the moment is one with the withdrawal of the moment-meaning from access.* To try to *appropriate* this moment-meaning is to halt its continuous coming, its ownmost alterity. We must lay ourselves open to the continuous coming of moments-meanings: new potentialities, surprise encounters, chance happenings, reorientation of directions. That is, we must lay ourselves open to *thinking in time*. We must hold ourselves unallied to anything save what's coming, without reducing this coming by any interpretive lens, concept or term. We must learn to see only with eyes unprecedented, eyes without judgment, without words – even if this means seeing with a heart constantly broken by the harsh evidence of irremediable sufferings

– this “now” which is no more because already tossed into the next moment-meaning. What holds us can’t be held to. To try to hold it could only mean losing it for good.

What emerges here is philosophy as *inner experience*. This idea underdeveloped in Nietzsche, later developed by Bataille, is not without resonance to the Eternal Recurrence and his rethinking of *power* itself. Nietzsche utilizes the term in a telling way in his posthumous notes: *inner experience is a way of reading without interpreting, without deciphering anything*. No eye to any “prior” or future meaning – no eye to anything. An apt physiological metaphor for inner experience would be that of the *open ear*. This non-deciphering reading includes one’s own internal thoughts, one’s whole sensorium and experience as “oneself,” as well as the “text” of the world and all the literal text(s) one reads within it. This ushers knowledge away from the paradigm of seeing and understanding as *theoria* to a paradigm of *undergoing-listening, of touching-exploring psychonautic textures*.

At this touch of meaning, this tuck or fold of the present-in-motion, *appearance and presence are one in disseverance*. Or rather, in the endless drifting of *our sense of things*, we cannot arrest the commotion long enough to tell them apart. They slip into one another too quickly. We are usually unaware of the vastness of what we sense. We are always coming after ourselves, coming after our world has bubbled up and evaporated. For every present presence is merely the appearance of what *is still coming to presence*, what is not-yet, as-yet-absent. Inner experience reads

appearance in light of what is coming, not in terms of what was, not on the terms of any prior position. Inner experience stands non-positioned, adds itself to the flux passing through. It passes itself through the flux in things. Everything is unsettled, from every angle, despite the appearance of stability. The unheard-of gets heard, God is shown... but ultimately, we simply affirm *life as passage and gift, meaning and being wrapped in one* – an “it is” that we can’t have, appropriate, or keep for ourselves. In this gesture of release or relief, there is the re-turn: experience. There is a remaining that exceeds whatever is there, a being-exposed in the slightest nuances of thought and in the most awesome upfluxes of history. What is at stake is our sharing of each other and our world.

### III

*Alone with the Universe*— The metaphysical becomes the other becomes the *intimacy of touches*. One is alone with all one touches, and therefore never alone, touching as one does almost everything. What keeps rising up, recurring, eternally, repetitioned, is once-each-time “the whole thing” – no particular thing or mass of things, no given identity or totality, but the *play* of the “whole thing” in each thing, each time, every time, simply infinite, with each place displaced with it, every moment subject to another moment coming within it. No telos, no stoppage, no final formation, no finish line. Every human attitude that would capture this plaything must humble itself. No artist or prophet, no hero or workhorse can approximate the breath and breadth of what’s arriving. It is as slippery as inexorable, fortuitous, free of every necessity. To measure up to it by effort, even the most supreme, will never cut it. A falling leaf does just as well: always gracing us. —Perhaps one ought to mimic the falling leaf, its light movement and easy repose? Perhaps, but as nothing at all: alone in the universe, drifting, touching so little and simultaneously touching the whole halcyon play, every center dispossessed, lovely and gay.

*All or nothing*— What is the mystical? What remains of holy union? Of freedom, joy? Simple: to laugh at the universe and yourself. Laughter most nonchalant, laughter most existential. For there is no question of being serious or unserious any longer. The sacred is the profane accepted and willed perfect, exposed and opened by attention and nuance, determined by hesitating to determine, by choosing not to frame anything, by letting things play and play against, unjudged – by laughing at the irreparability of things, which is their *flawlessness*. “All or nothing”: not alternatives but perfectly the “same.” Existence itself: uproarious affirmation, silent as the universe is long...

*Much ado about Nothing*— There are many reasons to read the great metaphysicians and mystics: to get a better grasp on the Absolute and Transcendent; to be inspired or revived by insightful phrases; to be spurred on to new attitudes and actions; or to be spurned, reproached by the master for one’s sluggishness; to learn the tradition from those who knew it best, who loved the Absolute in all the ten-thousand ways one can worship and think about it; to learn how all these ways evolved, devolved, triumphed, and failed; to absorb the poetry of these expressions and be reassured in one’s own expressive path; to draw from and appreciate the innovations and methods unique to each; to comprehend the uniqueness of the various historical and biographical situations; to awaken oneself from an overly moralistic or doctrinal understanding of “religion”; to shake oneself out of a psychological rut – and so on. Simply remind yourself that, in all these cases, it is *you* who understand

and grow, *you* who consciously and unconsciously determine the Divine you will know and love, *you* who incline yourself to the Highest. At no point are you following a model, plan, or rule, though you may play with an infinity of these. Remind yourself that *you at your very highest* are at stake in all these thoughts and words. Your future is utterly your own... —The one reason to read spiritual-philosophical reflections that trounces all the others? To laugh at the sage’s seriousness, his discipline and rigor; to share his own smile and acceptance of the opening in finitude; and so to laugh at one’s own seriousness, one’s own dilemmas and paranoid appeals, “What, God, shall I do?” This basic gesture – to laugh at one’s death, laugh it off... – simple as light, an inaudible chuckle – sums up the Wisdom of the Ages. Every little giggle renders you ageless: this we can believe. What else is there to learn? We all know it, more or less, to the same degree. A sage is special because of his troubles, just like us, not because of his “light.” *Illumination is but darkness managed lightly*. Levity is heaviness freed from fright. —Deep down we are all metaphysicians who know that, underneath our horror, there is laughter – *at nothing*.

*Drown your pain in piety*— At the end of all the supplicatory stances and contortions of the soul, there is one sure-fire way to ease uncertainties, regrets, failures, and so on: to acknowledge in full, and then to laugh at the fact, that there is no God to be found at the end of your reverent outbursts, that no one records your existential seizures and never has: all is erased, forgotten, remitted with barely a snap of a finger. And yet to keep praying, to no one, for nothing: that is piety. To love God is to not shy away from

mocking him. It is to smile at his pretension to Being, knowing that his ego is matched in size only by your own. As the seriousness of your pain evaporates into the neutral mists of foggy time, so too will the seriousness of thy God. Here is redemption, *tabula rasa*, forgiveness. Here is peace, all grandeur: the laughable nearness of the Kingdom – gone.

*Defeated by Grace*— Priority at times must go to resisted, unwanted emotions: anger, frustration, grief, sadness. These must be attended to, welcomed in passing, allowed to pass. What presents itself on the plane of the present must be accepted: only then it can open up. Otherwise, it is hard to avoid acting out on them to greater detriment. Instead of discovering in the unwanted emotion a dimension that transcends it – instead of determining it otherwise in that liberating element that transforms curse into blessing – we will try to leap away and cover it over with the false transcendence of distraction and drug. Whereas if we dwell with such moods, we give them a chance to molt their burdensome impression without exacerbating their root cause. We revise them such that the root cause no longer controls us but passes. To give grace – the gratuitousness of whatever comes to exist, of whatever erupts – a chance to win in our lives means: to be our own destiny, willing what is.

*The Text of Philosophy*— There's one rationale for reading philosophy: to recall or discover for the first time who or what we are and, more crucially, what it *is* to be: to draw our attention to where and how we “are being” ourselves – and who we are

becoming in so being. By definition, then, philosophy is for those who have fallen, those who have forgotten something about themselves that should have been impossible to forget. Something we have all forgotten, in one way or another, at least if we probe within ourselves: the sources of being. And yet, philosophy does not involve itself with answers but with the movement of transcendence, of difference directly; it tries to give the meaning of “to be” in the first place. But in that this meaning *precedes its intervention*, its remedies are duplicitous at best. And so instead of an exposition sealed off in its correctness and perspective, henceforth philosophy strives to expose itself and its truth to what constantly *surprises* it, to what comes to it from elsewhere – whether it be another idea, face, time, letter, world, or being. This is its vocation of *wonder*, which ought never be lost. Thought must be *taken by surprise* by the local event, the local world or local letter, the local beauty and incarnation where the origins of being are. Here philosophy is no longer “about” anything— self, other, world, letter, being— but *manifests these*. In a sense, it mimes being itself, in that it strives to remain open to the opening of each to each, open *in* the exposure of each to all, and so to the “truth” of being. It is thus that philosophy no longer thematizes its subjects or interprets texts but becomes directly subject to existence in its living-writing. One reads to enter this movement, to recall existence as that which gives birth to philosophy, as that to which its thinking must constantly return. The text of philosophy, then, is just one more origin alongside all the other origins of the world, all of them surrounding us, all calling our attention, inciting our ire or leaving us indifferent, and in all these ways *exposing us to*

*ourselves* – our love or lack of love, exposed to the transcendental-factual absolute of the world, to an existence that always *exceeds*...

*Essence of Spirit*— Movement and repose, movement and repose... The essence of spirit is to let yourself be swept up by the unknown, the incommensurate, by what we'll call God in passing but admitting no closure of this word, no capture; letting no institution, representation of the divine, itinerary of salvation, or system of concepts restrict your direction, your enthusiasm, your passion and emotion for the Infinite... and so neither chasing nor following but *letting the pursuit proceed from pleasure*, rigor, thought – not by the goal set out but by that which exposes us to what exceeds our highest goals and aspirations... The essence of spirit is to let yourself be taken over *by life*: by what presents itself to you, what happens *in time*: the next landscape, passage, face, text, love... For even if we rest, our restlessness will return to us. It will return us to whatever makes us move and shift, whatever vicissitude of existence or vista of sense there may be: relays never “had” or “mastered,” yet ours – *yours, you* - thrown infinitely into the love that opens us this side of death: that spirits us up and away...

*Nothing doing*— Spirit cannot be “accessed.” Or, it is accessed without being accessed, without any “thing” being accessed at all. Neither transportation nor transcendence, alleviation nor withdrawal. Nothing in the metaphors of the world translate it, yet it *is* nowhere but in the world's unknown movement, there in its eruption and bray. From out of the world, opening an outside within every inside, its only “mode” is one of invocation,

invitation, welcome, address. Apart from human activity, and from out of its very incapacity, *spirit speaks* and “saves” in the subtle shifts it introduces, in the subtle negations that change nothing about the so-called real world – except to the extent that it opens the unreal and unbelievable from within it. Something undeniable breaks in. Something in perception changes irreversibly with the idea that spirit invokes. Yet what is perceived spiritually in the world is, at bottom, perceived as *being in the world no longer*. Spirit is accessed as a slipping away, an erasure, of spirit, of the beings spirited just then. It does not induce an advancement, achievement, or historical progression; on the contrary, it brings all history to a head, to an “end,” tips time to the ahistorical, the intemporal. With spirit, the End breaks into Now. Now-time becomes the time of the “ending of time.” It puts us in contact with the very reality of breaking-off.

Access to spirit, then, is a death, death itself, understood here as the impossible, unimaginable, inaccessible. In opening the “end of time” in now-time, access to spirit opens death in life, hollows out an inactual in the actual, puts us in touch with a certain ineffectiveness, where life and death are reversible. *For there is no actual spirit: spirit is the suspension of the actual, cancelling it from within while elevating it to the realm of possibilities ever more impossible but paradoxically more “real” for us.* —And yet, what is real here if not the very *deletion* of ourselves from reality? What is this if not the meeting of catastrophe and utopia, disaster and eternity, taking-place and no-place, yet not in me, not in anyone, not anywhere? —Spirit is this *revelation of the All to the Nothing*, over which it has always been suspended. Spirit:

revelation of the very precarity of being, the fragility of bodies exposed, of words ever thrown into non-meaning. What spirit reveals is the possibility that *none of this might be*. That it won't...

It seems possible now to pronounce the word beauty – and *replace the hegemony of spirit with the grace of the beautiful*. To know that, in a mode of never-having-it, we *are* it. The beautiful is the gift of world-exceeding-world, the world-not-actual, the world-not-known which, for all we know, could end any minute, and we with it, we who exist in the same modality of not-being. *Spirit: expiration and excess, absence and eruption, both at once, both in the other – beauty spilling over its own borders*. Insight for the spiritual comes in the beauty right here – present work, present touch, present intimacy – and its experience in here-and-now-not-here, the nowhere – in the becoming manifest of love in the reality of its absence, or, if you like, in the distancing of everything from everything else, the very truth of “God.”

*Crushed/open*— Whenever a solid is struck with enough force from outside, that solid breaks apart, opens itself to the point of pulverization and scattering, extreme dispersal and dissemination. Condition of sharing: we five thousand cannot be fed if the loaf is not divided into smaller pieces. God's body does not remain within itself, posed over itself and retained in itself for itself, neither to preside over others authoritatively nor to present himself as an unchanging object for the subject's veneration. On the contrary, God's body is *the outside that we are* – crushed open by his own hands, *at* his own behest as much as by the soldier's spear, by disease, proving in both cases that God never remains himself but

exists his being *only to pour himself out*, share himself, empty himself (*kenosis*) in an act that both divides him and gives him out unbiasedly at once. Enigmatic upsetting of the “power dynamic”: the strong is parted out and made weak to strengthen others; the center is dissolved to display the centrality of each; an energy source charges out to energize others; a voice is made plural to encourage others to find their voice; the spirit between us is imagined to be made real: power becomes powerless to give each existence back its due freedom and space. —And so the heart is breached by what’s outside, an energy that flows through it though never properly its own, that explodes and overflows whoever feels it – to share itself *with*, as another’s *own*— crushed and open.

*Inescapable oppositions*— Being or not-being (given/nothing or not-given): we are suspended between these, suspended “in” the gift (nothing) that the world is or that the self “itself” (nothing) “is.” On one account, we pursue ourselves; on the other, we refuse ourselves. We are the world – the world along with us that disappears. Can we think “ourselves” outside this interplay of I/world, self/other, being/non-being? Yes, but never by a clean jump. One can neither assert oneself as one with an Absolute Self, in a process that fulfills all history (the dialectical mode); nor can one forget oneself and dissolve in an immanent non-being or nothingness of self, where we would rejoice in the nullity of our own non-being (the mythical mode). We can neither be Western nor Eastern, nor any spiritualized mix. But the jump outside these logics or modes of being will not be accomplished in a single bound, nor by denying how thoroughly we’re embedded in this

network of ideas and associations. Another logic, outdoing logic but still reasonable, is necessary: Any *content* we might assign to these “inescapable oppositions” is elided for the sake of their re-visioning, a re-marking that profoundly *alters* them – not by the work of the concept but through *a playful and patient displacement* of content into form – and *of the formless into new contents*. Use of this logic would not be reducible to personal choice, for the displacement runs far ahead of the thinker. It is called for by the current state of the spirit in time, in response to this historical moment when the sense of meaning has changed, or is undergoing a mutation, and when the character of beauty has broadened into new expressive domains. On one hand, we are merely refashioning the dialogical/mystical text; on the other, we are allowing radically different effects to manifest by orienting our activity to radically endless “goals” – to the *goalless*, the laughably free.

*Exposed*— Couldn’t *be* more naked, more *detached* from the world – not disengaged but *defamiliarized* from all that (supposedly) is. When all the customs of self have proven delusional, when the procedures and normal organizing principles of identity have been seen through and devitalized by dint of one’s total circumscription of them, one generally becomes an alien on earth. And once the institutions that used to gather those unsuited for this world are insane asylums and prisons, once any feeling of being unsuited to the average is viewed as a sickness or an anomaly to be purged? Only one “option” is left: detach, withdraw, *carry the devitalized world off into your own vital one*; sink into the essential network of forces you know instantaneously within, the powers of insistence

that demand your attention and expression, your heart and whole being, yet can't be named; fling yourself upward and out, *letting yourself* be flung, surprised, interrupted; ally to no duty, identity, preoccupation, conception; live as if you'd never visited this world before, as if you'd never seen night or sun; weep as necessary but without ever giving up, not hiding the scum felt; absorb the nothing like an extraterrestrial sponge; find yourself inside what is unforeseen and beautiful— *naked, we ourselves, one*.

*Coming to Presence*— We are not islands unto ourselves and we never have been. Our communication began long ago: we are the entire game; the whole play of the universe erupts with us. The system of subjectivity and its representations are nothing in comparison to this being-welling-up – this being that is no being (no substance, no thing, no subject), this being that *is* not – only eruption, only coming, arriving-without-arriving – an each-time-unique inimitable upsurge – *headed nowhere* (though thinking). Only what *is* erupting, what *is* coming is consequential. Nothing materially real, nothing lasting can be expected from this. Nor is there any anticipation of its sequence. The subject's grasp of it is always broken into pieces. Representation cracks, and the subject experiences itself as this cracking. But we ourselves are more than these cracks – though it is impossible to measure the magnitude of this movement where nothing sticks, where the upheaval of what *is* coming ruptures every stronghold. This inconclusiveness of being, devoted to the uppermost bound, is only discouraging if we try to anticipate the coming or grasp what it means with known concepts, connotations, and words. Where we have all the encouragement we

need if we remember: *courage is the essence of this movement – the spirit of creating beauty*. Nothing can bring it to a halt, no more than anything could pretend to jumpstart it. Coming to presence needs no motivation: we *are* it.

## IV

*Hand to the plow*— One can gauge a man’s earnestness by what he relies on for his life bread: epiphanies or practices. If it is insight, truths, great moments he desires, in time he will have them; but spiritually understood, this way of approach is still naive. Lessing writes, “To find the right path is often pure good luck; to endeavor to find the right path alone is commendable.” Only when one enters the realm of works and practices, leaving behind beliefs, ideas, and pious appearances, does one begin to show real earnestness in finding the “right path.” Epiphanies come more often, more subtly then; but one doesn’t rely on them, doesn’t need them. In fact, one may not even want them when they come, having experienced how they all too often serve as a cover for blindness in another area. Whoever endeavors by practices, who ensures that *the endeavor is the only stance*, vows to make good use of the present state without relying on memories of previous states, for here lies a strategy that will outlast every epiphany: *only by ignoring the heights reached is one able to aim higher.*

*Drawing boards*— The problem with those who write manifestoes is that, afterwards, they go off on their mad crusade, putting their megalomania into action, instead of doing the more sensible thing, taking the more thoughtful course: *re-envision the manifesto*.

Because one is never totally clear what one's ideas really are. To act them out before they've been pruned and clarified is to doom oneself to short-sightedness, if not to murder. What's responsible, ultimately, is to take a second look, wait a second – to remain in suspense until the end and, with some luck, be prevented from bringing down the sword on what we love, on the *promise* before us, which we so often jeopardize with our own hands.

*Double drafts*— Genuine advancements in thinking are born of one's dissatisfaction with the modes of thought we encounter in others. No one who is satisfied by what others tell them would ever try to say something new. To think for oneself is, on the contrary, to think something no one but you could think, to say something no one else has said or could say. It's not just that one feels separated from or shortchanged by the old ways; more basically, one is *bored* by them. What once was new has become predictable and unexciting. Revelation has sedimented into assertion. To advance in thinking, to write, is to demand something more than empty repetitions, even of the most laudable “sources,” unless repetition be rooted in an innovation of idea and articulation, expression and life. —To think, receive from unprecedented life an excitement that can only be discovered in your own uncertain advance, a thought whose as-yet uncharted landscape is finally, fully, your own.

*Spillover*— Due to necessities internal to it, thought proceeds in fits and starts; the challenge for the thinker is to *endure the fits* and *prolong the starts*. For thought's fountain is erratic and bucks everyone, forcing one to get up and go in search of new springs. Old materials are unsuited to fresh outpourings, and every new contraption is outdated soon enough – sometimes long before the job is done, or the thought brought to conclusion. Then we are thrown into a fit, forced to deal with disastrous droughts. On such occasions, we're liable to misunderstand ourselves and all we've done. We lose hope in the whole network of aqueducts and canals we've made to channel thought's flow, to convey our thought's substance, which often became, too quickly, mere ice and runoff. At these supreme moments of emptiness and bad luck, we are faced with the option: return to the necessities of the city, where the waterworks are well-developed and there is little risk of running dry (however questionable the water quality may be). Or continue seeking the channels most appropriate for us *despite* the routine dryness of our search and the general tragedy we imprint: to venture so far into the contingency of our art that we find what is essential to it; to find ourselves situated in the strength of a thought coming from elsewhere, interrupting all our scripts. —To think then would be to *endure every inessential fit*, knowing that *the essential start always splits off from the central current*. Only then, in seeming darkness, does our knowledge transform itself, through error, into the radiant negative: real thought. Only then do we realize that what mattered all along were other trails, each one left to be tracked again by others, and perhaps even by you

yourself again. Without that correspondence, that exchange essential to thinking and life, we would die lonesome, of mortal thirst, bogged down in scripts of gloom and death. Whereas now, suddenly, out of nowhere, “our cup runneth over”: we learn what it is to be alive in thought’s gift.

*Free ride*— There is no thinking of existence save that which abandons the attempt to “explain” what is to be thought. For a thinking that tries to think existence, there can be no explanations, for existence cannot be explained. And so it must not be. A thinking of existence must strive to exist: its matter and manner must strive to be “one with existence.” Striking up its resistances against all answers, all significations, all assumptions, *all forms*, it refuses finally to finish with meaning – precisely because existence itself never finishes with it. That is, *the meaning of existence is always returned to the existence of meaning*, which outdoes whatever meaning we might put to it or put it up to. This is the “justice” that thought tries to render to existence: to think it just as it *is* – just as it exceeds itself, just as its meaningfulness exceeds whatever it means. A thinking of existence tries to think this excess both as the *matter* to be thought and as the *manner* in which that thought is to be expressed. It thus resists objectifying existence as this or that and instead holds fast to its grip and play. At the end of explanations, thought meets poetry, speaks its own unsayable: the strange *existence of thought*. To think the existence of thought is to think at the limit of existing meanings, to think the limit of meaning’s existence: where it is exposed to what is coming, to the other, to the unforeseen – and so to the meaningless. Thinking

enters the stream of existence by refusing to “do” anything but give existence back over to itself – its halt and leap – which it knows it cannot “do,” which it knows no “operation” of thought performs. And so the thought, like poetry, imposes nothing: it only exposes itself to the majesty of nothing, the here-and-now of its beautiful play. Thus thoughts free itself to existence and opens what exists to its very own measure of immeasurable freedom.

*Unsettled*— The border between confusion and uncertainty and the most lucid confidence and epiphanic consciousness could not be thinner and more undeterminable than what’s risked here. With the breakdown of traditions that once guaranteed insight, we enter into the obscurity of a sense, an idea, and an articulation which now take on their greatest existential weight. In this intensification, lucidity is forced to enter into new territories stripped of all guarantees, areas that require *crazy vigilance* and *strong wills* – and just as importantly an incredible sense for *surrender*, for receptivity to the passage of sense, which passage is truth in all its suspense and obscurity. Above all, what grows here is a sense for *otherness* within and without – a thinking *in time* that is catalyzed by touches and exposures, by beautiful intimacies. One must go beyond intention and the conscious will into a state of *courageous vulnerability* to all that happens, that outstrips the “one” of oneself. Yet one must also be ready to *will that fortuitous happening* over the precipice of its potential or ultimate meaninglessness, ready to accept the fact that existence outstrips itself, strips itself of every essence. For this lack of essence is the portal to the very meaning of existence: its lack of vocation, its lack of “proper work,” its

*gratuitousness*. For our consciousness in time of erasure and passage, our consciousness of the tenuous nature of all things human and signifying, constantly reminds us of this lack of essence, this meaninglessness, this superfluosity. The threat or guarantee of confusion and uncertainty can never be obviated by any lucidity or epiphany, no matter how grand. Understand how this strengthens our practice and our will, prevents us from feigning to master death, keeps us conscious of the need to make and remake the ties of life and sense, by keeping us conscious of the fact that *ties only exist in being retied*. Sense is in the creation of sense, which creation is equally the arrival of sense from the other, to which to whom existence is exposed to be. Sense is never in the sediment of works and words but in the revisioning that starts from the presence of the unforeseen – the surprise essence of being, the beauty of spirit.

*Aimless Joys*— One must do all one can to concentrate one's physical energies and spiritual powers in a one-pointed fashion toward that which is most liberating and transformative without ever pretending to have been liberated or transformed. Only a sober practice, rooted in the most deep-running friendship and solidarity with the whole mass of suffering and confused humanity, will do; only in this way does nihilism fight nihilism on its own grounds without simply switching territory, substituting new guarantees, minimizing the forces of the decay of meaning, or, what's worse, pretending that these forces of decay do not exist. For we cannot forget that *there is no relationship outside of the renewal of relationship*, no tie to the world without retying

ourselves to where the world is made. We *intensify* the nihilistic standpoint to the world and to things, and in this way we “make sense” out of the senseless, “make world” out of the world-lost. We learn to love in a world of irremediable suffering and death without pretending to save it. For we are not fooled: no real triumphs exist, no conquering, no proofs, no works, no insights, *no nothing*— only this monstrous abbreviation we call the end of time, when thought comes to a standstill before the arrival of the other, the arrival of sense in passage, the arrival of truth as the suspension of clear knowledge. —And so we ourselves evaporate in the enigma of a humanity *fulfilled in its cancellation*, realizing its nonexistence, glorified in its own sweat and sweet exile and extinction – its royal road to the aimless joy that exceeds any given life.

*Performance Anxiety*— Every great performer is blinded by his own love. He has practiced much and won. He knows his theme, his cadence, his direction, his tone. And yet for that very reason he loses, forced to play the pawn of his own creations. He is always outplayed, deceived by what he wants. He reaches it every time, but therefore he never reaches it. And so he is condemned to the blindness of every artist, by his own need for repetition in light of the nonrepeatable, for constant speech in light of what will never be said – by his own need to discover for himself what is *actually* yearning to be said. He is condemned – or rather blessed! – to reiterate a yearning that will last forever, that is infinite. Those who observe his performance demand he articulate himself perfectly, that he remain fresh, exciting, entertaining, and so on.

But he knows pleasure only flows from beauty and beauty from truth. He cannot please others without pleasing himself, for if he cannot please himself then, surely, he has lost all connection to truth. And so in his need to share the object of his passion, to discover it for himself, he turns infinite yearning into “something” *to prove that what must be shown he cannot show.*

And so his art becomes a lightshow where an *explosion* ought to be. He surrenders his performance to causal interests, short attention spans, quick consumption, incautious criticisms: he makes his work public. However, he sees little need to be understood by the indifferent spectators or meet their demands, since his productions are doomed from the start to fail, and he knows the lifeless repetitions to which his art sometimes must be confined. Despite the publicity, he knows he must do right by the world he is responsible for creating and take no dictation from those who have no care for it. And so he goes on, ineffective but disabused, strapped with various instruments, reiterating idiotic themes, submitting to the inspirations of this or that progression, however it annoys or delights the others involved. He knows that, in the end, *no pain can hide.* For is it not perfectly fitting that some will resonate while others disband?

We are not here as performer and audience. We are not here to transmit any theme, meaning, or message. No, because we feel, vaguely perhaps, in the midst of the repetitions, that something else can and does happen. Something unprecedented can spark up between our terminals of sense and show the performance for what it is: destined to be erased in the surprise instant of perception and communication – perception *as*

communication –; destined to disappear as it appears and opens itself to being perceived and known, in that fleeting instant only graspable in its flight. Its only purpose was *to evaporate in another world coming, another world created*, to knot up into other worlds. A communication that only conjures up and carries off a certain recollection of the immemorial, or truth – syncope of sight and intellect, memento of the impossible – shared in this moment of performance that halts us and our thought in its tracks, opens us to a reappraisal of all that is. The performer performs for the sake of this *reappraisal of being in praise of passage*. It is for this that he lives. In this moment, shivering, we remember again the content of all revelation: that amidst all passing, something remains, and *we* are it. Even as we have all but passed away.

The performance, ending in silence, ending in time's continuation, in the beauty of the world given back to explosion and exposition, exhausts its repetitions solely for the sake of this truth. In this there is the whole principle of climax, of a time that strives constantly to fulfill itself, to fulfill its end in us. For in the time it takes the performance to end, for the world itself to come to a close in our close, we find our time – the time that remains to us, that we share, the time of our life and our love.

## V

*Midnight strike*— Only one image captures that feeling of anxious excitement we get when we hesitate at the threshold of a new endeavor, of a new and *dangerous* activity that makes us weary and uncertain if we will come out intact: the image of being struck dead on the spot by God. How much dynamite has gone unlit at these fears, that the whole world would fall apart if we moved into action! How many blasphemers and heretics have kept quiet out of this fear of irritating a God they themselves disbelieved! But we too hesitate, this time before an even more ambiguous social force, an unnameable voice in our head that says, “No, you can’t do that – just imagine what they’ll think!” —But if we learned to think nothing of “them”? What a laugh we would have – *at our own expense!* What breach would we not leap into!... —So let us assume no one will ever really see or understand us again, that everyone will henceforth find us – and *you* especially – vulgar, incomprehensible, mean – vaporized suddenly, overwhelmed by the surge of unheard-of energies, struck down – *gloriously free.*

*Absolute inequalities*— There is no bigger error than to think that all men are made equal and that each one deserves equal respect – unless born equal means equally helpless, bubbly, choking, soft, whining, and miserable. We are not equal creations because each one, it must be said, *creates oneself*. Each person must decide what to do with fears and dreams. Each person must decide what to do with what they know. Each person chooses between the heights and the plains, the current and the changing. Each day, one either rests and stagnates or overcomes and creates. For we each have premonitions of potential, and each one of us chooses whether or not to listen to this voice. We each await construction and molding, a severe master. Yet one must *choose* to be that for oneself... — Let those who strive for excellence stop hesitating then and *refuse what fetters* them. The others will eventually understand – or suffer endless disappointment.

*No turning back*— Once one decides that the edge must be walked, one must vow to refuse all opportunities to walk back from the edge, to seek assurances from the danger. A great fortitude is required for truths that do not settle well with us. One is asked to remain steadfast in the unsettling truth and to refuse to settle for anything else. One must accept making enemies with all those who seek “happy truths” – those who rest in the lies that make human life possible without wanting to examine things any further. This means, first off, taking great issue with the “happy truth” *oneself*.

*Happiness or Truth*— What links us: we are driven by truth and not by happiness, insofar as happiness *implies* the one-who-would-

be-happy; whereas truth goes so far as to dissolve one in a grander movement, without the enclosure of self. Of course this doesn't mean there is no happiness for us! Only that it is heavier, less reassuring. Ours is the happiness that dawns along the ending's truth, when we see things from "the end of the world" – from when we are no longer ourselves and so *have no reason to avoid taking a chance*. We see from the blind spot of our own *not-yet*, the non-knowledge associated with the radically unanticipated: our brush with death. We believe we best reach the other in this way, best resonate in their ear, offer the *resonance of self*. In the long run, this blindness we share cannot be refuted. We don't know beforehand what will make us happy, which makes for *our* elation in the unknown future. No desire to be self-satisfied, we are driven by what disrupts the happy self, driven to lose ourselves in the other, in the immensity of the Nothing that encompasses us. So quickly taken outside, we expect no happy returns. *The heavy truth of our own non-return dissolves us*. We become conscious of ourselves as lost pieces, free valences, kindling for audacious fires: humans who share the experience of this each-time-unique chance, this just-once opportunity to live and come alive – who share this just-once *as life*, in all its fragility, rarity, and *joyousness*.

*Despised or respected*— Be forewarned: he who begins to think inevitably assumes the status of a *general offender*. An essential element of thinking is an understanding of criminality or evil – of *possibility* in general. Thinking opposes or slides out from under three views of the world: 1) that we "know" what world we live in, 2) that there may be "another world" where things are different or

better, and 3) that there is a “real” and “true” world behind this one we know (which we could access, critique, withdraw from, act upon, believe...). By contrast, whether it be this world, a world beyond this world, or a truer world behind this “false” one, thinking resolutely takes up against every world-view, every *meaningful* world insofar as meaning *saturates* its possibility... Without this fundamental disrespect, there would be no thinking worth the name. Anyone who takes such thoughts seriously will quickly become a pariah in one’s own home (which is why few do it). The question becomes: to what degree will you take on the *intensity* of your thinking? How many idols and abstractions will you latch on to, how many lies will you continue to declare? How many will you expose to the flame of thought, until their ashes become the paste for a new mask? To what degree will you accept being *despised* by yourself? To what degree will you follow your own desire, take back your chance as yours? How much are you willing to frighten... yourself?

*Expose thy wounds*— One must wage war on oneself, against one’s modesty, one’s faintheartedness and timidity, but also against all the residues this lack of will leaves in others and in the structures of daily life. Notice how little most care to fashion their own life-worlds, and then refuse to relax at the challenge. Refuse to settle, even if it means becoming a veritable *criminal of contemplation*, a manifestation of the negativity of the world set up in negation of it. Not passivity but a *refusal to forbear and yield*. Refuse the guilty conscience that keeps speech and action “meek.” Choose instead to be as bold as Jesus himself and as powerful. Refuse any objection

that comes from unpopularity, from those who won't think, who insist on haste and hatred, who are impatient for prescriptions, or who make a strategy of evasion – who aim solely to be aimable. Who are these frogs and imitators, anyway? Those who are afraid to be exposed for what they are: injured by their own complacency. —Meanwhile, thinking sticks its thorn in you and drives. The wound cannot hide away. Real thoughts oblige us *to stab*.

*Great Politics: Nietzsche's war*— When the Idols, Truths, and Ideals finish toppling; when the Parties and Commissions prove alibis for greed, profit, and corruption; when neither Public Honor, Women, nor Money animate us; when the Church fills with rapists and the Court with liars; when the Academy breeds dweebs and shallow worms; when Psychology excuses relaxation and cowardice; when Literature becomes occasion for fancy woes; when Philosophy forgets to think... then begins the great upheaval, the great war! Then the desire to flock, congregate, gather, organize, *be together*, is over! Then only ice and faraway peaks mark the frontier; then only a pathos of distance sustains our mind-boggling goals; then only by dissociating from “them” do we satisfy our conscience and become *useful* to potential once more; then only a war of spirits, a *friendly war of driven lives* becomes our purpose; then every battle we wage is on our own, against ourselves; then our only goal is to be more courageous than every contemporary, than every man who came before us; then our only choice is to leave the organization and become *warriors*.

*Will to Power as Eternal Life: Nietzsche's science*— What have we to do with concessions to death? Do we not know that “death” means filled-up and pleased? Do we not know that the imperative to “be happy” means: “lay down and die”? Whereas we are satisfied by one thing only: *eternal life*. What is its science? Dispel ourselves, make room inside ourselves for others, reach for the otherwise-truth. What paves our way to its threshold? Whatever resists, whatever conquers inner obstacles, whatever makes us fighters for truth, whatever makes us scared and anxious and so reveals our *courage of heart*. For only that which presents itself as insurmountable is worth surmounting; only that which cannot be challenged is worth challenging; only that which cannot be done is worth doing; only at the farthest edge of life does life find a purpose worth working for; only we who have given up on “self-preservation” know what it is to *last – to outlast ourselves, to give ourselves in others*. Only those who take death to heart in life will know the Life Eternal. —Yes! only we, *we scientists* – thanks to you – will survive...

*Open Knowing: Nietzsche's ignorance*— Open knowing implies the imperative to *remain ever indifferent to yourself*, to the advantages or disadvantages you may or may not reap from your quest; to the dangers you may be led to or the stupidities you may confront; to the outcome of your speech, the product of your work; to the harm you may cause yourself and others; to the importance or unimportance of what you do or leave undone; to who you will be in the eyes of others – and in your own. The grand imperative? *Tear out your own eyes* (God's): see no good or evil; go forward

neither happy nor unhappy, elevated or low, generous or cold. For upon you lies the injunction, not to be all things for all men, but *to be the highest one for the highest one*, which means imperatively, instantly, to be higher than *you* have been, to raise yourself *higher than you can be*. And what open air up here, what wide expanse! What majestic regions lie ahead, new species to sight and see! Believe me: if you go your way, you will not fail to enjoy your treachery. You will not regret the sacrifices you make to get where none can go. For what does one become when one gets there? What does one see? *A call to others*. You ensure and you promise to others that one only gets there oneself – standing on generations of love, friendship, luxury, and aide, yet standing solitary – riveted, captivated, dissolving – knowing *there is no going back*.

*Imitatio Christi: Jesus' power*— We are no longer fooled by the overflow of tacky crosses that dot our horizons. We are no longer fooled by those who, unable to muster any virtues of their own, shelter their lives behind meekness, peaceableness, and obedience. We are no longer fooled by those who idolize he who said, “No idols!”, those who use their worship of Jesus as an excuse to *pose no challenge* to him. We have decided against them: the only way to honor God is to betray him and the whole set of artifices that belittle him and human beings. One must become him, realizing “God” indicates a state of *increasing maximum beatitude* linked to *life in the truth* – an *unsteady* state, a *risked* state in which God is never simply himself and pushes himself to the point of delirium and ecstatic tears – not tears of reverence but *of thankfulness and of gift-giving*, tears born in the *willful abandonment of oneself* and

in *emptiness*... When we honor God, we match his gesture, looking always to *rival his passion*. We are only satisfied when *our power to rise* matches his. For it is no longer a matter of overthrowing or replacing God but of *meeting him*: of being God at God's level, realizing that his height is ours *as we manifest it*, that we know God best in the experience of *sustained peak intensity* – the only “purpose” being to achieve greater intensities, to dare ourselves and others higher. —We do not know Jesus until we know him *as an evil*, in his *criminal* aspect. We do not know Jesus until we “die” to our solidified languages, our contrived histories, our abbreviated sense of time, our uninteresting catalog of worlds. We know Jesus when we unfurl as an *obstacle to ourselves*, a scandal the likes of which no one has ever seen. We know Jesus when we realize that the meaning of *our* life matches his: we must strive to live it that way, risking ourselves to the limit, unafraid to feel tremors like those he felt, unafraid to feel the earth giving birth to the unimaginable within, unafraid to say of God that he and we are *one*, unafraid to accept the blessedness of being and the beauty of life eternal. For resurrection only comes when we've broken the yoke of our own mundane spellbinding, when we've passed through the hell of our severest feelings and come out *knowing we are real*. For how do you know you're real, after all? Have you made sure your life is not utterly inconsequential? Have you given yourself a chance at living beatitude? Have you “given your life to Christ” – to the divine life that *you are* and *may be*?

*The Only One: our solace*— To “become what one is” means that you *are* only what you *become*; and subsequently, that you will

never *know* exactly who you are. You will not know this because you will only exist as the *edge* between “who you are” (who you are no longer) and “who you are becoming” (who you are not yet). You are both *act* (of self-overcoming) and *event* (of being-surprised-by-yourself): tensed effort and unbearable enigma: life and death. As a first consequence, you must accept that you are no one. No one knows you; you do not know yourself. In comparison to what you are becoming (the sky at noon...), you will always be a semblance (a shadow falling on itself...). To the extent that you pursue yourself in earnest, your potential will grow exponentially larger than *you*, as a semblance of your future self, could ever encompass. And yet, effectively, you’ll be no different from this growing potential. It is less your difference from yourself than an operation of *differing* that is centered on you: a moment-meaning of the universe in flux, as it *reaches the Invaluable...* —Each shadow cast must know its stature in the light of its own sun. Sun is the warmth, the energetic touch, that makes you scratch off the dead skin. Eventually a point comes when you can hardly stomach your own shape and color, the old self and image and old behaviors that identify you in a crowd of peers. *That* shadow will quickly aggravate and exasperate your breath; yet, however long its cast, you will be obliged to play it out. Its shortening takes place, as you well know, *in secret*. For years, only *you* will see *its new field* taking shape. Perhaps most often even you won’t see it. This is a preparatory time, a testing ground: Will you become what you are, with the shortest shadow? Or will you fall aground and assume the long shadow others assume is yours? There will be crucial companions, do not underestimate them. The glimpses they

catch of your burgeoning self – just as I now catch sight of you – will be indispensable early on, when you are unsure of what you *look like* and need to see your promise reflected in the eyes of trusted others: to see their surprise and incomprehension at the budding monster before them. But in no time, immediately in fact, the inadequacy of this also disappoints. What others see in you can easily become a trap. It should not be believed if it lacks agreement with your own highest sense. Friends cannot help but tempt you with happiness, temper your fervor with cheers and pats on the back. In your allies you will find countless unwitting traitors: they will relax you, comfort you, assure you, encourage you, defend you, assist you, love you... and while all this is indispensable, one must be sure these moments are *not indulged*, that they do not become occasions for weakness or a too-easy comfort in the world. One must never be fooled into thinking someone knows the fullness of what you're going through or should – especially since *you yourself* do not even know. How many powers have been lessened by some care overindulged, some commiseration one did not have the heart to resist! —So understand that we, your friends, do not, cannot, *must* not understand you. And you must not ask us to. You go become the highest, the only one, and tell us where you come. For we do not become ourselves *en masse*, but only *one by one*.