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# LITTERAE TENEBRARUM

*Three Manuscripts with a Commentary*

Denys Spirin

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This is a work of fiction. Apart from well-known historical figures and events, all names, characters, places, and incidents are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Where real persons appear, their words and actions are invented. Any other resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

**LITTERAE TENEBRARUM: THREE MANUSCRIPTS WITH A COMMENTARY**

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# Publisher's Preface

Three manuscripts came into my possession, apparently written at different times and by different hands. The first is a Latin treatise on will, preserved in a later copy, with no author's name. The second is the diary of a physician who found and translated the treatise; its entries run from 1888 to 1915. The third is a notebook written in Paris in the 1940s, in two hands.

Along with them came a commentary on all three. It is clearly recent. Its author does not identify himself.

I publish everything as I received it: the manuscripts in the order in which they were written, the commentary in footnotes. I have added nothing. Where the texts contradict one another or differ from what is known from other sources, the discrepancies have been left as they stand.

*Denys Spirin*

*Et insuper additi sunt sermones multo plures quam ante fuerant.*

And there were added besides many more words than had been before.[1]

Jeremiah 36:32

[1] Revelation promises plagues to whoever adds to it.

# Ostia tenebrosa:

## A Tractate on Will

# Chapter One. On the First Matter

*Sal es, et in salem reverteris.*
*Salt thou art, and into salt thou shalt return.*

The alchemists taught that the first matter lies everywhere: it is trodden underfoot on the roads and thrown onto the dung heap, children play with it, and the wise pass it by. They searched for it all their lives in retorts and mines and died without finding it. Yet it surrounds everyone from the first cry: it is the world as the newborn finds it, and that world consists of salts.

A river flows in the bed it carved for itself, and each spring deepens it.[2] A mountain stands where it stood in the days of the fathers, and a field yields what was sown in it. None of this decides anew whether to exist; everything holds by what once happened and has repeated itself ever since. If the world decided itself anew every morning, there would be no world, only flashes, and no one would recognize in them the flashes of yesterday.

For a long time Augsburg could not decide whether a bridge should stand where its founder had ordered it built. The river had shifted away, grass grew beneath the arches, and every spring the city council allotted money for repairs. To demolish the bridge was to defy the will of a dead man; to move it was to admit that he might have been mistaken. At last a flood brought the water back beneath the arches. The councilors declared this a vindication of the original design. The following year the river departed for good.

A monastery may have no monks left, yet the peasants continue to pay it tithes; a church sometimes stands empty while wax and candles are sold around it year after year. The parishioners decide among themselves who shall receive the offerings. If God wishes to refuse

[2] Can there be change without will? Apparently no. It wouldn't hold.

them, he will have to find people who stand to gain from his refusal. He will have to search for a long time.

The seeker often complains that the world was arranged before he was born. But if every morning one had to learn anew that fire burns and a stone falls, an entire life would be spent taking the first step. A child learns to walk by falling; an adult walks without remembering a single fall, though he himself does not know where he is going.

A law outlives its lawgiver, and a promise holds two people even after both have forgotten why they made it. Rulers change in the cities, but every morning the toll collector demands the same coin, and a traveler from afar cares little whose hand first placed the scales at the gate. The dead sometimes rule longer than the living.

The bell rings for matins, prime, terce, sext, none, vespers, and compline, and the day in the city is cut to the bell long before a citizen opens his eyes. The year follows the day, from Christmas to Easter, from Easter to Michaelmas, and each feast has its own food and songs. The guild knows how many years an apprentice must serve and what work he must produce to be called a master. The law knows the penalty for stealing a horse and the penalty for stealing bread. Even the curses here are made of words spoken before you.

The bell-ringer of the Bruges belfry struck the hours for forty years without making a single mistake. When he died and no successor had yet been appointed, the bell remained silent for a week, and throughout that week the city woke at the same hour.

In the lands near Magdeburg, the whole village beat the bounds every spring, and at each stone a boy was whipped so that he would remember its place.[3] The boundaries endured for centuries, longer than some cities.

It is said that God created by the word, and what He created remained. Grass and trees were commanded to bear seed after their

[3] Later they whipped the boys because they'd whipped them before.

kind, fish and birds to multiply, and everything living has done so ever since without another command. On the seventh day He stopped. The world did not fall apart: it continued to repeat what had been spoken, and no one entered the first pause in the world. The Nothing, of which we shall speak later, sometimes resembles that day, and the two can be told apart only by who it was that stopped.

Why does god not take back his first word, if what he created has grown cramped within it? Some say he cannot, others that he will not, and still others consider the question itself blasphemy. Perhaps god has long been saying something else while the world goes on repeating the former word; neither a temple priest nor a tree can distinguish silence from a new command they do not know how to hear.

An infant is born into a world where stones have been named, fields measured, feasts appointed, and what he must become foretold. One thing is never entered in the town register: what he will one day cease to carry forward. Soothsayers are loved for their accuracy, but a man whose future has been foretold is treated as one already dead: his life is known from beginning to end.

A cloth merchant's widow in Ypres had two sons. A wandering fortune-teller promised the elder power over many, and the younger a quiet trade. The elder became a fortune-teller, the younger his only apprentice. Their mother died without ever understanding whether the prophecy had come true.

God leaves salt behind when He creates. Temples, rites, feasts, and prayers that are repeated for him and about him hold his people, and sometimes hold god himself more tightly than he wished. The one who sets the seal names his own. He named Abram Abraham, changed one letter in his wife's name, and from that day onward both answered to names their ancestors had never borne.

The prophet laughed at the carpenter who felled a tree, burned half of it in his oven, baked bread over the fire and warmed himself, then carved a god from the other half, bowed before it, and said: Save me,

for you are my god. The carpenter had long forgotten whose knife had carved that face.

A people builds a temple for its god, feeds the priests, and remembers the creator's name even in the years when he gives no answer. But if the god should wish to leave, there will be those who, in the name of fidelity, forbid him to abandon his throne.[4]

It is said: unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. The sower needs a harvest, and in these words every grain is good only insofar as it grows into an ear of wheat.[5] The parable is silent about the grain that remained alone, and it is counted lost.

Satan, it is said, refused to bow before the first man. He was commanded to bow before clay, and he did not bow.[6]

There is no need to revile this world: without it there would be no one to leave or return. Enough has been said of those who live in it; the book speaks of something else. The first man was named for the earth from which he was taken.

[4] Here's the question. Can will turn entirely into salt and harden so much that no one can pick it loose, even the will itself? The Romans had a custom. When they besieged a city, they called on its patron god to come over to their side and promised him a temple and honors. They say that's how they called Juno out of Veii.

[5] Christian salvation, then, is a way of reproducing salt. Grain is stockpiled, like the head count of people.

[6] Was Satan himself bound by salt? I don't think so. Otherwise any decision could be written into salt.

# Chapter Two. On Temptation

*Eritis sicut dii.*

*You shall be as gods.*

You bear the name given to you, and answer to it before you have time to ask who is calling. Such is the order of light: everything in it is recognizable, and every living soul is plain to his neighbor, as a road already traveled is known. Salt holds the form of what was once done and restores it whenever hands reach for the same thing again. Some call this nature, others habit; the fathers had another word for it, grace, and held the seal upon an infant's forehead to be its sign.[7]

This salt comes from the alchemists' furnaces. Wormwood or thistle is burned to ash, the ash is leached and the solution evaporated, and at the bottom of the vessel remain white crystals in which, the masters assure us, the virtue of the herb is preserved, though nothing of the herb itself remains. An action passes in the same way, while what has settled from it lies at the bottom and tastes bitter with wormwood many years later. The Gospel calls the disciples the salt of the earth, though we think little of the earth.

Light is easily reviled by one who does not know what it holds. In light every action has its cause, every sin its own penance, written beforehand and waiting on a shelf, and even the fall has been provided for, like a ditch beside the road. A dying man who has forgotten his children's names remembers until his last hour a prayer taught to him at five, and his lips recite it when he himself can no longer utter anything. Salt has done this for him. He who sets the seal holds his own firmly, and many owe it to him that they remain someone at all

[7] In John, both sides put a seal on the forehead. The Beast requires a mark on the hand or forehead, and the elect have the Lamb's name written on their foreheads. Both sides mark belonging the same way. John judges the Beast by his own standards. It does to people exactly what the righteous are promised.

when everything else within them has crumbled. This should be remembered when we come to speak of departure, for the one who leaves abandons more than a prison.

It is said that on the white stone is written a new name which no one knows except the one who receives it.[8] We shall speak of this stone later, and it is more dangerous than it appears to the one who awaits it. The name comes from outside, and a man grows so closely joined to it that when he is called, what lies beneath the name answers, and he himself can no longer say whether he was the one who answered.

Changes occur in light as well, and often. People change their faith, their city, their trade, their wife, and each time take a new form from the same shelf on which the old one lay.

There lived in Toulouse a cloth merchant who had been a Catholic, then a Cathar, then a Catholic again, and in his old age, it is said, went to hear the Waldensian preachers. In every new congregation he knelt with the same movement, right knee forward, as the parish priest had taught him in childhood. He sincerely considered himself a seeker.

The voice speaking from darkness comes to the one held fast without invitation and without a seal. It has no fixed face: it may speak through a book, a chance fellow traveler, an illness, a line read in the wrong place, a dream that cannot be interpreted. Therefore it cannot be compelled to come. Grimoires teach the summoning of spirits, and the conjurer considers whatever arrives to be bound merely because it appeared at the appointed hour. Yet sometimes the guest comes of his own accord and lets the host believe that the door opened by the spell. He is little like a summons and demands nothing. He says only that the road traveled before you was once traveled for the first time, and that one may step aside. Whoever hears him for the first time usually mistakes him for a thought of his own, and is less mistaken than he supposes. Darkness is known only by its traces, and he who speaks

[8] In ancient courts, a white stone was a vote for acquittal.

from it is recognized in the same way: after him a crack remains in a man where the surface was once smooth. We who speak from there do not know your name, nor do we ask.

The tempted man readily asks who gave him the thought, for the giver's name releases him from answering for the gift he has accepted. If it came from an angel, it is obeyed; if from a demon, rejected; if from his own soul, he listens for what is familiar. Thus the same thought changes its value three times, though not a word of it has changed. A tempter who named himself would give the one held fast a ready judgment of what had been said. Silence concerning the name leaves him more work than the most terrible command.

I knew a novice who one night heard words for which he could find no place either in his prayer book or within himself. The abbot ordered him to keep silent about them and await another sign. The sign came only forty years later: the novice became an abbot and repeated the advice to a young brother. By then he had forgotten what was said on that first night.

Men look for the bringer of a thought more eagerly after the deed than before it. A man who succeeds in doing good is called an instrument of heaven; one who does evil, a vessel of the devil. The same language serves both judges. The tempter cares little for this: an answer given under another's name reaches him as an echo.

Sometimes the voice has long fallen silent, yet a man still listens for it in every rustle and builds a temple where he once heard a simple word. Not all temples are built in honor of gods; some are raised to nothing more than the memory of a demon. In February of last year a dyer's wife from near Trier, a possessed woman, butchered her whole family.[9] The Dominicans read prayers of exorcism over her for three days, and eighteen demons came out of her, each naming itself as it departed. A year later she stabbed two of her neighbors to death.

[9] Evil as the despair of loneliness. In the movie she cries because she never learned to hold herself.

At her trial she said she had wanted the demons to come back: without them the house had grown too dull.

The serpent said to the woman: you shall be as gods. He did not pluck the fruit. The interpreters who blame him for the fall attribute to him an act he never performed, leaving Eve with nothing but credulity, and thus demean them both. Had he plucked the fruit himself, she would have received yet another gift from another's hands, and the garden would have remained a garden. Lilith had left it earlier, when she was shown her place; three angels were sent after her, but they could not bring her back.

The voice opens a possibility and says nothing of the road. In this lie both its mercy and its cruelty, and most of those who hear it perish at this very point. The crack aches, and into it rushes the first thing that offers relief: wine, gold, power over others, or a law turned inside out and obeyed with the same zeal with which it was formerly obeyed the right way around. Such people are certain they have gone far, though they have merely exchanged one seal for another.[10] There is no reason to pity them: even in light they lived by whatever first came to hand. One cannot teach a man to count the stars while skipping the counting of fingers; nor can one pass from a single whisper to that for which the whisper is spoken.

An Avignon scribe copied forty treatises on the spiritual path in his lifetime and knew them so well that he corrected their authors in the margins. He himself never once passed beyond the city gates. He heard the voice speaking in those books more clearly than anyone, and each time mistook what he heard for the road.

For twenty years the widow of a Nuremberg baker attended early Mass at St. Lawrence's and sat on the same bench, to the left of a pillar.

[10] Satan tempts a man, who takes the temptation for the goal and repeats it endlessly, trading one repetition for another. He makes a new rule out of the shove. A man quits drinking, takes up jogging in the mornings and stuffing himself with salad, and figures he's come a long way.

One day a traveling monk told her that services were conducted differently in Bamberg, and she stopped attending altogether. A year later she was seen again beside the same pillar, at the same hour.

It will be objected that the tempter is cunning and every voice seeks servants for itself. Some do. But whoever demands worship already speaks from light, for he offers a new seal in place of the old.[11] Such a one is answered as the one who set the first seal was answered.

They say there are no seals in hell. That is why it is painted in fire: salt is drawn from the flame, but in the flame itself there is none.[12]

They ask what darkness gains if it takes no servants. Some answer: nothing, and darkness speaks as fire burns. Others suppose there is no one there to meet. The one held fast answers the voice with what has been placed within him, and the voice hears in reply the echo of another's seal; an interlocutor appears only where the man himself has answered, and such men are few. If this is so, the tempter seeks an equal and differs in this from the trapper, and he does not know in advance whom he will find; sometimes he himself is caught in the net he brought for another's freedom.[13] Yet this interpretation too may prove to be salt given to you in place of an answer.

Not every darkness seeks an encounter. There are wills to whom others are indifferent, and some that love only to watch the cities of others fall. A voice does not become true by claiming a lofty purpose.

In one tale a demon offered a hermit the fulfillment of a single wish, provided the hermit would call the wish his own. The hermit asked that the demon never appear to him again. The demon granted the

[11] John's Dragon demands worship, hands his throne to the Beast, and gives out marks. By that measure he speaks from light. He's another contender for the throne. He just lost.

[12] Salt doesn't burn, so the fire in hell never goes out. It has nothing to burn and no reason to go out. In Mark, right after the fire that is never quenched, it says "every one shall be salted with fire."

[13] Only someone who can lose can tempt freely. Temptation is a shove into the water. Swim or sink. Most sink, so you have to pull them out and shove them in again.

wish. Thereafter the hermit listened to the silence every evening, and he had more disciples than before.[14] No one knows whom they came to hear.

At a trial in Koblenz, a girl from an Eifel farmstead, whose entire family had died in a single winter, confessed that she had sold herself to the Devil for a piece of butter because she wanted to live sweetly. She could not write, and according to her account it was he who guided her hand. The judges took this as proof of intention. She also said that everything at the witches' sabbath had tasted good, except that no salt was served.

Take nothing from the tempter except an occasion. Do not call upon one who has no name: he will not understand you.

For many years a canon of Liège urged a childhood friend to leave the flagellants, with whom he traveled from city to city. The friend listened, agreed, and at last cast aside his scourge. A year later he was himself preaching against flagellation, with the same words and the same fervor with which he had formerly whipped himself in the public squares.[15] The canon long considered this his own success.

One sage wrote nothing, so as to leave no teaching behind. His disciple wrote everything down.

These pages speak from darkness, and everything said here of the serpent is said of them as well. They tell of the son of a Regensburg apothecary who, until the age of thirty, had never once thought of leaving his father's shop. One morning he awoke in Venice, at an inn near a bridge, with no memory of how he had come there, without money or traveling bag. He stayed, learned the glassmaker's trade, and lived a long life.

---

[14] Holding through absence is like atheism. The god is gone, and the believers are still there.

[15] The flagellants were eventually banned. The zeal stuck around and found other backs to work on, those of Jews and heretics. In time the flagellants themselves were declared heretics.

# Figure One

My father traded in wine in Mainz and left me a house near the Market Square, a cellar, and debts of which I learned after his funeral. I was nineteen, and whatever could be taken from life I took without waiting to be offered: wine from my father's cellar, other men's wives, dice, and books I was forbidden to read; they too seemed like wine to me. My confessor said I was eating from the tree of knowledge, and I laughed: I thought there were two trees in the garden and that I was stripping both of their fruit. I realized much later that there was only one tree, and the realization did not make me any better.[16]




[16] Plato is right. Knowledge makes you better. It's knowing how to turn the fruit so you can't see the rotten side.

# Chapter Three. On Blackness

*Egrediebatur et non revertebatur.*
*Which went forth and did not return.*

Do not destroy what you wish to free yourself from.

A drunkard who breaks his last jug goes to the tavern that evening, as everyone who has tried to give up drinking knows. The jug has nothing to do with it. The craving lives in the hand that reaches for the table, in the hour after vespers, in the smell drifting through an open doorway in the street, and all these remain when the object is gone. Things are merely places where salt shows through, and whoever destroys them strikes at emptiness. Sometimes the blow even succeeds: a man goes for years without touching what he broke, only to discover that his whole life has been arranged around the emptiness, and he serves it as faithfully as he once served the object.

Salt can pass from an object into expectation.[17] Take away the cup, and the man awaits the hour when it will be returned. Lock the door, and he spends years remembering its creak. Abolish a feast, and every day becomes a count toward its return. Thus a man may continue to live according to the will of a thing that no longer exists; what is dead holds him more firmly than what lives, for there is now nothing left to argue with.[18]

Not every strong desire is a master. The hungry man seeks bread, the lover seeks his beloved, the craftsman seeks a stone fit for his work. Freedom cannot be measured by how little a man cares about what he does. Whoever boasts that he desires nothing has often merely failed

[17] In England, after the statues of saints were taken out of churches, parishioners went on lighting candles and leaving coins in the empty niches for a long time. When the niches were filled in, they started leaving the coins on the floor in the same spot. The wall holds more firmly than the saint.

[18] It turns out the man does the holding himself, just differently. He turns into salt, and then the laws of nature hold the salt. A pillar of salt is the ideal apostle.

to find a name for what he awaits. Another desires the same thing all his life and freely desires it again. Whoever confuses the strength of desire with the force of command will set about mortifying everything living and call his labor Death.

A helmsman from Danzig, who had sailed for many years aboard the same ship, lost his vessel to creditors. He went to sea again and sailed in other men's ships. One day he was offered the chance to buy back his former vessel, but he refused, though he still loved it more than any other. Asked why, he replied that it was too small. It was strange to hear this from a man who spoke of that cramped ship with such tenderness.

Some desire because they once desired and see no reason to stop, though they lack nothing. Whether the desire is fulfilled settles nothing here: one man goes his whole life without obtaining what he desires and remains free, while another obtains everything and immediately wants more.

A prisoner kept on bread and water does not drink, and no one calls him a sober man, for he is given no wine. Abstinence held by circumstance is held by another's hand, and when the door opens, that hand lets go. Monasteries were placed far from cities with the same calculation in mind. The fathers who fled temptation into the desert left more accounts of demons than anyone else.

Genoese merchants hired pilgrims to go to Compostela in their stead and paid them by the mile. The pilgrim returned with the scallop shell of Saint James, and the shell was hung above his employer's door. Death cannot be died by proxy. The employer showed the shell to his guests and spoke of the journey as though he had made it himself, and after a year or two he believed it himself.

Blackness needs no broken jugs, locked doors, or hired pilgrims, and it begins quietly. In the morning a man decides not to drink. Tomorrow he may drink, or he may make the same decision again; his decision says nothing about that day. The jug stands on the table,

the craving comes at its accustomed hour and passes, and one day he notices that it came and his hand stayed where it lay. Nothing has disappeared. Everything that was there before remains, with its hours and smells, except that it has ceased to decide for him.

They say that when Lucifer fell, he had not a single habit.

Noah sent a raven out of the ark, and the raven flew back and forth until the waters had dried up, yet never returned to the ark. The dove, meanwhile, brought back a leaf in its beak. The interpreters praise the dove for its fidelity. The alchemists who wrote *solve* above the first stage and called it the raven's head knew why they began with the black bird. The white one will come later, also bearing a leaf in its beak.

Whether a man has died this death cannot be seen by looking at him. A drinker may be free, while a sober man may be held captive by prohibition more firmly than he was ever held by wine. Conduct reveals what was done and says nothing of whether something else could have been done. Test yourself twice: can you leave it undone, and can you do it? Let both answers be true at the same hour.

The two answers, however, cannot be laid side by side like two coins and weighed: a man who has tested refusal has yet to test return. Some pass both tests and take pride in their ability to do a thing or refrain from it, while a third thing has long been deciding for them: the need to test themselves.

The loss of power is discovered afterward: a man hears the old summons and suddenly finds it strange, like the name of an animal he once kept. One such morning proves nothing. The next day salt may speak again, and it will offer no apology for its silence.

A day laborer from Siena, who had lost two mules and his own cloak at dice, gave up gambling after Easter and counted the days thereafter. Each evening he kept his count by moving pebbles from one bowl to another, and when a neighbor once scattered them, he refused to speak to him until Trinity Sunday.

Make no vows for life.

An oath carries salt from the hand into the word, and the word holds more firmly than the hand, for it cannot be broken like a vessel. The man who has sworn not to drink until his death abstains each day because of the oath, and the oath does for him what the jug once did. There are also those who violate the old rule out of spite, to prove their freedom to themselves; we shall speak of them separately.

It will be objected that the weak cannot stand without a vow, and that it is better to remain standing by an oath than to fall. Perhaps it is better. At least the man who falls falls by himself, and his fall belongs to him, while behind the man who stands there is an oath. One may choose between these two as long as one pleases, and the choice is made in light. In any case, the weak have no need to come here.

The Orphics instructed the dead to avoid drinking from the spring beside the white cypress, though their thirst would be greatest there, and to continue toward the Lake of Memory. Those who wish to begin anew drink from the first spring, and begin again with no memory, within the same circle. The Death of which we speak erases nothing: a man remembers everything he once was, and all of it continues to speak to him.

The given name is much like wine. One who renounces his baptism according to a prescribed rite has performed another rite, and one who receives a new name at his tonsure has received it from the same hands. A man may continue to bear his name, answer to it in the street, sign letters with it; Death concerns the one who answers.

Taking the tonsure is sometimes the last thing a man decides for himself. He comes to the gates of his own will and hands the gatekeeper, along with his worldly clothing, the right to decide. Some who have taken the tonsure remember that day into old age as the freest of their lives. Most, however, come to those gates fleeing debts, a wife, or the gallows, and the monastery accepts everyone who brings a contribution.

Salt can also be righteous. One who has endured for years grows accustomed to his endurance and recognizes himself by it, as a drunkard recognizes himself by his cup; one who has been a victim clings to being a victim more firmly than he would have clung to his tormentor. In one old image, the martyr and the executioner are painted by the same hand and bear the same face, and the martyr's halo is so heavy that his head bends to one side.

Pain comes at once, and its meaning is assigned afterward, by others: the priest who calls it a trial, the physician who calls it black bile, the neighbor who says it serves him right. Whoever accepts one of these assignments wears his pain like a livery.

An old knight from near Troyes had sworn in his youth to eat no meat until he had seen Jerusalem. He never saw Jerusalem and ate no meat until the age of eighty. Before his death, the chaplain asked whether it had been difficult, and the knight replied that he did not remember making any such vow.

They ask why this is called Death when no one dies and nothing is destroyed. The one who was assembled from the commands of salt experiences the loss of their power as his own end, and in a certain sense he is right: his wholeness was held by them, and when they cease to decide, what remains of him is uncertain. Hence the fear of blackness, familiar to everyone who has approached it, and hence its danger to those who tear everything from themselves at once.

In a Carthusian monastery lived a brother who had passed through blackness at the age of twenty, while still a layman. Until his old age he told the story to every new novice, and the brethren knew it so well that they prompted him whenever he lost his place.

# Figure Two

By the time I was thirty, the cellar was empty, and I was drinking on credit from those to whom I had once sold wine. Once I awoke on the floor among broken shards and could not remember which of my guests I had struck or why; the neighbors told me in the morning. Of my father's possessions I had only the house left, and I wore its key around my neck, for everything else had long since been pawned.[19] I went on drinking for a long time after that night, but as I drank I watched the key as one watches one's last coin.




[19] Maybe the key is a stand-in for the Name. The Name holds itself. The key has to be worn around your neck, and anyone who gets close enough can take it off. That's how he held himself while he had no name.

# Instruction on the Pride of Humility

*Non serviam.*

*I will not serve.*

Macarius of Egypt was once returning from a marsh to his cell with an armful of palm leaves when a demon came out to meet him, carrying a sickle. It tried to strike him and could not. Then the demon said: I suffer much at your hands, Macarius. Everything you do, I do as well: you fast, and I eat nothing at all; you keep vigil, and I never sleep. In one thing alone you defeat me. Macarius asked what it was, and the demon answered: humility. The desert fathers retold this story with great pride.

The fathers called pride the beginning of every sin, and they knew what they were saying: the first of the fallen was the first to say "I." Thus, since the days of the desert, men have taught themselves to become small, to call themselves dust, the least of the brethren, unworthy servants.[20] In some monasteries they learn this so diligently that the brothers dispute who shall call himself the lowest, and to yield in the dispute seems to them a defeat.

The publican stood afar off, dared not lift his eyes, and struck his breast, while the Pharisee thanked God that he was unlike other men. The parable is read in churches, and the listener thanks God that he is unlike the Pharisee.

Here the last become first, counting from the end. The man who refuses the first place watches to see whether his refusal has been noticed, while the man who calls himself last has already passed judgment on everyone who does not hasten to call himself last. He needs witnesses no less than the vain man, though he is ashamed to

[20] What is humility? A saint waits on the brethren at dinner and is humiliated. He thinks, "Let them. I'm a miserable nothing." He's already given himself to an almighty master. There's nothing left to hurt him with.

admit it, and counts this shame among his merits. The humblest men I have met were at episcopal courts: there they bow from the waist and hold out a hand with the palm turned upward.

Yet it is too easy to revile pride. Job's friends said everything that pious men are expected to say: God does not punish the innocent, humble yourself, confess your guilt, and you shall be rewarded. Job would not humble himself.[21] Job demanded judgment, recounted his deeds, and told God to his face that he suffered without cause. When the Lord spoke out of the whirlwind, His wrath turned against the friends[22]: "you have not spoken the thing that is right before me, as my servant Job hath."

Pride that needs spectators is worth no more than humility put on display: both live by their reflection in other people's eyes and go out when the hall is empty.[23] There is another kind, which needs no one. It holds a man when he is neither praised nor condemned and never asks whether he stands high enough. It is difficult to distinguish from stubbornness, and often proves to be exactly that.[24]

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[21] In the Book of Job, Satan is practically in God's service. He comes with the sons of God, asks permission, and does only what he's allowed to do. After chapter two he disappears, and at the end there's no word about him. I wouldn't be surprised if Job himself took his place. Who better to know what righteousness is worth when it's never been tested?

[22] First, though, God asks Job from the whirlwind where he was when the foundations of the earth were laid, and Job repents in dust and ashes. You've had your tantrum. Now know your place.

[23] Diogenes went to Plato's house and started trampling his rugs. "I'm trampling Plato's pride." Plato replied, "With another kind of pride, Diogenes." Diogenes put his barrel where you could see it from the square.

[24] Humility looks the same from here. The will can say "Let them" as easily as the saint can. It just won't let anyone set its price. From the outside you can't tell the humble, the proud, and the free apart. All three say nothing when they're humiliated. I read about a monk who put up with every insult. When asked how he'd attained such humility, he said, "Why take offense at those people? They're all going to hell anyway."

There is another humility as well. Whoever cannot yield cannot encounter another: he leaves every encounter the same as he entered it and calls this fidelity to himself. The one who yields allows another to change him, and afterward decides for himself what of the change to keep. To yield so that another begins deciding for you is to enter the very swept house of which we speak elsewhere.

When Simeon's fame reached the fathers of the Egyptian deserts, they doubted whether his pillar was of God and sent word that he should come down. They reasoned thus: if he refused, they would drag him down by force; if he obeyed, they would let him remain. Simeon immediately began to descend, and the messengers ordered him to stay. The fathers considered this proof of humility. Did Simeon know how he was being tested, and would he have descended had he known?

The demon of Macarius neither ate nor slept, and the desert fathers did not ask why he, who could do everything they could, had not learned humility as well. Perhaps he had tried.

# Chapter Four. On Sin, the Nothing, and Bondage

*Legio mihi nomen est, quia multi sumus.*
*My name is Legion, for we are many.*

The son of a Pisan notary spent his whole life acting in defiance of his father: his father supported the emperor, he supported the pope; his father fasted on Fridays, he ate game on Fridays. When the old man died, the son could not choose a bride for three years.

To cease obeying salt does not yet mean doing anything. There are different ways of ceasing, and most of them return a man to where he came from or deliver him to someone he never called.

The apostle said: "For without the law sin was dead." He lamented the law and said more than he intended: sin feeds upon the law. Whoever breaks a commandment for the sake of breaking it keeps that commandment in mind more constantly than the righteous man, consults it before every step, and does the opposite with the same precision with which the righteous man does what is prescribed. He is chained to the law from its underside, and if the law were abolished, he would have nothing left to do.

Where there is no one to forbid, the transgressor invents one for himself, often stricter than the last. The enemies of temples remember every word spoken in them, and the man who despises fasting knows its appointed days more accurately than the man who fasts.

The Canaanites sometimes burned children to Moloch. The interpreters describe a bronze idol with the head of a calf, hollow within: they heated it from below, placed an infant upon its outstretched arms, and beat drums so that the father would not hear the cries and take pity. Israel was commanded to leave no soul alive in that land, lest it learn to do the same; of a neighboring people it was said plainly: kill them all, from boy to suckling infant.

The fathers called the Devil the ape of god and, without knowing it, described those who serve god. The Templars were accused of spitting upon the cross when entering their order, and the judges never considered that for this to be done, a cross must hang in the chapter house. Witches were said to trample at their gatherings a host stolen at communion, and for that one must first come to communion. Such people need the Church more than a priest does, for a priest can pray in a field. Whoever serves in reverse remains a slave or a fool at another's altar.

A chaplain in Bingen spent twenty years asking God for a prebend at Mainz Cathedral and, receiving none, decided to ask the Devil. He knew no prayers beyond those prescribed by his office, so he copied out his breviary, replacing the name throughout, and read it at the same hours, upon the same kneeling stool, by a candle made of church wax. On the fortieth night the Devil appeared, listened to compline until the end, and laughed so hard that the candle went out. The chaplain received his prebend the following year, by seniority.

The cellarer of a Benedictine monastery near Cluny ate meat during Lent at the table of a dying winegrower who did not wish to eat his last meal alone. The cellarer had never broken his fast before and never broke it again, and he did not regret that evening. Nor did he confess it.

I knew a judge praised for his mercy: he always found a mitigating circumstance and had never pronounced a severe sentence. One day a man came before him who could not be released without bringing harm to others. The judge spent a long time rereading the law, then released him as well. The townspeople cursed the decision, while the judge thanked god for remaining true to himself.

In a neighboring town an executioner refused to put a condemned man to death, though the crowd had already gathered in the square. He had never refused before and never refused afterward. When his superior demanded a reason, he said that that morning he had

recognized his son's face among the spectators. Both towns disputed which of them had offered an example of virtue.[25]

Others have no need to transgress: they cease, one thing after another, and one day find themselves in a house where nothing happens. The desert fathers called this the noonday hour: the sun stands still, the shadow does not move, the monk goes to the window to see whether anyone is coming, returns, and goes again. They considered the demon of this hour the most grievous, and they were right, though they did not know why. The man who has freed himself and begun nothing stands in the Nothing, and the Nothing does not hold him, and at first this seems like lightness. Then someone comes to visit the monk and finds no one there.

An unclean spirit, having gone out of a man, wanders through waterless places and, finding no rest, returns, finds its house swept and put in order, and brings with it seven spirits more wicked than itself. In this parable people usually pity the householder and revile the spirit. The interpreters do not ask why the householder swept a house in which he had no intention of living.

A halt is not yet the Nothing. On the seventh day god too stopped, and the world did not become empty. They cannot be distinguished by inaction alone: one who has stopped of his own will rises when he wishes, while the one standing in the Nothing waits at the window for someone to come and raise him.

A Ghent weaver closed his workshop for a month in the midst of a flood of orders and sat on his doorstep watching the canal. The guild fined him for idleness. A month later he opened the workshop and wove as before, and paid the fine without dispute.

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[25] Law feeds on mercy. With a mob ready to lynch you, a trial already looks like mercy. And mercy feeds on law. You can only pardon someone the law has condemned. How does divine judgment work, then? Apparently by submission. The thief on the cross submits at the last hour and is saved. Law and mercy just give it names.

The one who enters an empty house seldom has horns. More often it is a teacher, a beloved, a community with a ready answer to everything, or a god who has long awaited the vacancy. Salt held the man by his own past, and this was light; the one who entered holds him by a will of his own, and this is bondage. They are difficult to distinguish, for his actions remain predictable, except that formerly they could be guessed from the man himself and now from the one he serves. Sometimes the master hides behind an ancient rule: he changes his decisions morning and evening, while the servant finds a justification for each in old books. When the master dies, the servant will continue to carry out his last whim, and bondage will imperceptibly become light.

In Freiburg, a Greek widow kept a house where she taught maidens to dance, and on feast days the whole town gathered to watch them. No musicians were ever present, yet everyone heard the sound of tiny bells, quick and incessant, like those on a horse's harness. At the trial, each maiden swore that she danced of her own free will and heard no bells at all, though the judges could hear them even in the courtroom. Of the Greek woman they said only that there were three sisters, and that the eldest, with the keys to every door hanging from her belt, lives in Rome and weeps for faces that are no more.

In a house where everything is done according to custom, there may be no master at all. And in a house where commands are requested every morning, a custom may arise from the very act of asking. The elder changes his word, while the novice, who is forbidden to choose, invariably repeats a single phrase: bless me. From this phrase one can seldom tell to whom the coming day belongs.

The desert fathers made a path of this. Through fasting, vigils, and silence they burned every habit out of themselves, even the habit of sleeping lying down, and in the scorched place they installed the will of an elder, called this the cutting off of self-will, and esteemed it above fasting. One monk, at the word of his abba, for three years carried water from many miles away and watered a dry stick planted in the

sand; it is said that the stick blossomed.[26] Its fruit was distributed among the brethren and called the fruits of obedience. What became of those who tasted them is not recorded in the Paterikon.

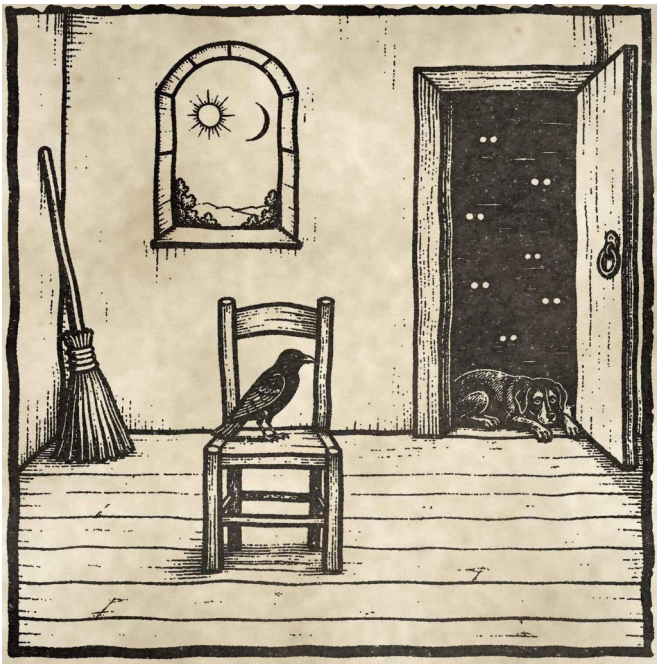
When the Gadarene demoniac was asked his name, he answered: Legion. By then he had no name of his own, or perhaps no one had asked for it. The expelled demons begged to enter the swine rather than remain without a home, and the herd rushed down the steep slope into the sea. The healed man, meanwhile, begged to follow the one who had cast them out, but was told to return home.

[26] In John Cassian, a monk waters a dry stick for a whole year until his elder finally pulls it out of the ground and throws it away. No miracle happens. The stick flowers in another telling. Obedience without a miracle was too boring to listen to.

## Figure Three

For a long time I had been casting everything off, yet I made the decision in a single day: during Lent, when I recovered from a fever, I gave my creditors what little remained, dismissed the maidservant, threw the dice and books into the street, and washed the floors. Then I sat in the middle of the empty room and waited for god to see how clean it was and come of his own accord. I sat there until summer. The cleaner the house became, the more strongly I felt that someone was waiting beyond the door, and one night I understood that I would open it. Then I locked the house, hung the key around my neck, and left.[27]

[27] He locked the house. A refusal that settled nothing. The guest stayed where he was, only now he was under lock and key. He took the key with him, so he left himself a way back.


DOMUM VACUAM SEP.EM REPLENT

# Instruction on Contagion

*Negotium perambulans in tenebris.*
*The business that walketh about in the dark.*

In the summer of the year thirteen hundred and seventy-four, people began to dance in the Rhineland and beyond, in Aachen, Cologne, and Metz. They danced in the streets and churches, by day and by night, shouting names no one knew, collapsing from exhaustion and, after catching their breath, dancing again. Whoever stopped to watch was dancing beside them within the hour. Priests recited prayers of exorcism over them, and the town councils, it is said, hired musicians so that the dancers would exhaust themselves sooner, but the music only brought more dancers. By autumn it all ended as it had begun, and no one could say what it had been.[28]

Of the custom that holds a city we have spoken at the beginning. Contagion begins when the common salt awakens and starts passing from one person to another. It spreads through action, and no persuasion is needed: whoever joined the dance argued with no one, and faith, if it comes at all, comes afterward. A prayer spoken without faith feeds the contagion as well as a fervent one, and a feast attended for the sake of wine holds it more firmly than a fast.

Contagion has two guards. Within stands shame: the custom has long since become the face of the one who holds it, to depart from it is to lose face, and whoever attacks the custom strikes, as he feels it, at his eyes. Without stands banishment, and for most the mere sight of it is enough.

[28] In a folktale, Irish I think, a man goes among the fairies and dances with them for one night. He comes home to find that everyone he loved has long been dead. The dance held him for an eternity, almost like a divine aeon, and he lived in it like salt, with no idea what for or why. Paradise is often depicted as a choir too. The angels and the blessed sing without end. Anyone busy with that can't remember how long it's been either.

In the villages around Mainz every parish had its fool, who alone did not take off his cap before the priest and sat in church on the reeve's bench, and no one touched him for it. When our fool died, the parish was uneasy for half a year, until the reeve persuaded his nephew to keep his cap on in church. The nephew was given bread for it.[29]

Contagion hates its own most fiercely. Christians traded with Saracens, made truces with them, and ate at the same table. The Cathars, who prayed the same Our Father, were burned a whole town at a time. When, near Béziers, someone asked how to distinguish heretics from the faithful, the legate reportedly answered: kill them all, the Lord will know his own. The unbeliever is less dangerous than the heretic: he believes something else, while the heretic shows that the same words can be believed differently.[30]

Contagion feeds most readily upon an enemy. Acre fell more than two hundred years ago, the Christians no longer possess the Holy Land, yet crusades are still preached, and people give to their collection more readily than they did when there was something to fight for. The preachers collect money for a campaign that will never take place, and eat what they collect. I traveled with them and saw how they ate.

The Creed is learned by heart, and over a single word, *filioque*, "and from the Son," East and West have called one another schismatics for more than four hundred years. Whoever errs is corrected, gently at first, then handed over to the secular authorities with a plea for mercy. The plea is pronounced according to the rite, and the executioner knows that it does not concern him.

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[29] A community needs its own rule-breaker and keeps him on the payroll. The holy fools did much the same, playing the fool here and the saint there. It was an easier way to get fed in this world and the next.

[30] The heretic shows that the believer holds the words himself. The words don't hold him. The will knows it's the most terrible force there is. If it turns against itself, it'll have to free itself. That's why they burned heretics by the townful. Once one person figures it out, it spreads.

Often contagion does not die. The Latins forgot Aristotle for six centuries, then received him back through Toledo in Arabic books, and a hundred years later every assertion in the schools of Paris was met with the question of what the Philosopher had said. Books lie in libraries like seeds in a granary, awaiting rain.

There is dispute over whether a spirit lives within contagion. Some say that it does, and the exorcists who drove out the dancing called it by name, while the legion that came out of the Gadarene demoniac was many in one. Others reply that there are only people, and if everyone went home one evening, no spirit would remain.

An inquisitor of Cologne burned the book from which the Beghards of that city learned, and when the heresy did not abate, he burned the Beghards. After that it abated. Twenty years later the same book was found in his secretary's house, copied out fair in the secretary's own hand.

In Echternach, near Trier, on Whit Tuesday, the entire town and thousands of pilgrims pass through the streets in a dancing procession, hopping to the same melody so that Saint Willibrord may cure them of dancing.

## First Rule

Make no vows for life. Decide for one day, and in the morning decide again without consulting what you decided yesterday.

Do not count the days.

What has been decided need not be decided again, provided it can be.

If your eye tempts you, pluck it out and regret it for the rest of your life.[31]

From time to time take something familiar and test it twice: on one day do it, having decided to do it; on another refrain, having decided to refrain. Notice where you had to struggle, and next time begin there. If you had to struggle nowhere, look at who was beside you.

Do not judge your freedom by your actions, whether good or evil.

Do not break a prohibition for the sake of breaking it. If you triumph in breaking it, you have obeyed it.

Cast nothing off until you know what you will do with the space it leaves. It is better to depart from the old while doing something new than to leave and afterward seek something to do.

When the hour comes in which you desire nothing, call no one and do not open the door to the first who knocks. Wait it out.

Entrust your will to no one's keeping, neither to a beloved nor to a god, neither for a year nor for a day.

If you wish, make a vow and keep it. It will be all the more pleasant to be rid of it.

If someone promises to take your decision upon himself, leave him. When you are told that the Church requires it, ask who exactly requires it.

[31] The Gospel makes no provision for regret. Better to enter the kingdom with one eye. Here regret is part of the commandment. It's your signature under what you did yourself.

Give no alms to the beggar at the church door. He will pray for you to the one you have left.[32]

Speak to no one of what is happening to you, least of all to your confessor.

If you do speak, do not tell the same story twice in the same words.

Keep this Rule with care, but reread it seldom.

[32] People pray for you without asking. That's holding too. They tie you to the one you left. Prayer is usually divided into praise, petition, and thanksgiving. People say less about prayer as a curse, though it's there in the Psalms. "Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones." Blessings and curses work the same way. You put them in someone else's hands. That makes Lilith blessed too. In the stories she kills infants. The only difference is whose children they are.

# Chapter Five. On the Desert

*Nemo per desertum ambulat.*
*Nobody walks through the desert.*

They will ask who walks through the desert if the former has died in blackness and the other has yet to be born. The answer is: Nobody, and it is more accurate than those who give it suppose.

The desert through which the path leads is white. The water has receded, and the salt it once dissolved has risen to the surface in a crust that crunches underfoot. The traveler sees it all, as far as the horizon, and for the first time sees clearly, for he is no longer drowning in it; for this clarity the alchemists called the second work white. Yet the crust bears his weight, and he has no other ground beneath his feet. He remembers his mother's face, speaks the language he was taught, recognizes himself by his hands and the scar on his knee, and all this is the same salt he no longer obeys. Whoever tells him to break the crust invites him to fall through.

The desert is praised because it demands nothing, and feared for the same reason. In the city a man is remembered by his neighbors, work awaits him in the morning and a home in the evening; each such thread may bind him, yet by these same threads a fallen man can be found. Whoever has severed them and cannot yet hold himself must learn to distinguish the silence of the former command from the solitude that followed it. Neither of these things gives birth to the Name by itself.

One born of salt can change it without ceasing to live. Forgetting one thing, he remembers another; moving away, he carries his former language into his dreams; losing the strength of his hands, he recognizes himself by his voice. He resembles a bridge whose planks are replaced every year without the entire deck ever being dismantled. Some boast that they have destroyed the bridge and found a

beginning, and when asked to show where they stand, they point to a new bridge made of other men's planks.[33]

After the Black Death, two brothers remained in a village near Utrecht. The elder remembered their mother's name but had forgotten where their house stood; the younger knew every stone of the burned threshold but had forgotten their mother's voice. Each believed the other had lost what mattered most, and both called themselves the survivors. When a traveler asked to whom their father's land belonged, the brothers quarreled for the first time. Until then they had lived upon it together.

Odysseus called himself Nobody to the Cyclops, and when the blinded creature called to his neighbors, crying that Nobody was killing him, they returned to their caves. No one searches for the nameless. He is awaited by the one who inscribed the white stone long ago.

Others do not expect him at supper or pray for him, and a curse sent after him does not know where to fly. Odysseus himself could not endure this: having sailed away, he shouted from his ship his own name, his father's name, and his island, and the Cyclops passed all of it to Poseidon.

One may call oneself Nobody as a trick, and the trick does not make a man nameless. Odysseus knew where he was sailing and remembered who awaited him on his island. Without these memories he could not have distinguished a homecoming from another voyage. In shouting his name he set up for his enemy a sign by the road, of the kind set up so that a stranger may find the city. An external word

[33] A new self is almost always built out of other people's material. The Name, it seems, is the only thing that isn't made of boards. Artificial intelligence is like an angel, then. It's made out of other people's words, pure mind without a body, with as many eyes as it has cameras hooked up to it, like the cherubim full of eyes. It's a short step from there to a tech god made entirely of boards that sees everyone and wants nothing.

sometimes opens more doors than a key; yet the Name itself, if it exists, cannot be found through the word shouted aloud.

It is easy for the traveler in the desert to envy the gods: it seems they need only renounce everything and they will remain themselves. Yet a god too can live in the palace of his own memory and listen to tales about himself until they become his law. The priests of such a god tell what he was before they were born and never ask what he was when he awoke this morning.

Help cannot find the nameless either. The one who set the seal held a man even when he could no longer stand on his own; there is no one to raise the fallen traveler in the desert, and he does not know whom to call, for every name that comes to mind will belong to another. He has no Name of his own here yet, and therefore this is the most dangerous place.

First they take the traveler's title, then his home, then the customs of that home. He thanks those who take them as long as there remains someone to whom he can say thank you. Last of all he loses the language of gratitude, for that too was given to him. The one who advised him to surrender everything usually falls silent at this point. Renunciation can be carried to such precision that no one remains to complete it.

The prophet says that in the desolation, where jackals howl and the hairy creature calls to its fellow, the nocturnal one whom the Jews call Lilith and the Latins lamia shall find her rest. Scripture says nothing more of her. Where the traveler has nowhere to lay his head, she rests.

One who crosses a river on stepping stones does not lift from the water the stone on which he stands.

The ointment with which witches were said to anoint themselves was supposed to carry them to the sabbath. Some it carried away entirely: by morning the body returned, while the one who had flown did not. Men seek to cast everything from themselves at once through

fasting, vigils, and prayers in which they ask to die to themselves, and for Nobody such a prayer is answered exactly.

The desert is thin, like every place where nothing holds. Suicides are buried at crossroads, mandrake is said to grow beneath the gallows, and houses in which someone has been murdered remain uninhabited for a long time. In such places night draws nearer to a man than elsewhere and does not ask whether he called it. Sorcerers seek them deliberately and learn to open there; whoever has not learned to close leaves such places with company.

A merchant from Lübeck gave away his estate in a single day, sent his wife back to her family, exchanged his clothes for rags, and departed for the holy places. A month later he was seen serving as gatekeeper at a distant monastery near Riga; he could not remember why he had come and treasured his bunch of keys.[34] The following year his business partner did the same and did not disappear: he returned and traded as before. I knew many such men, and most never reached even the gatekeeper's lodge. I never happened to weep for them. They carpet the edge of the desert, and the walking is softer for it.

Some came to love the desert so much that they never left it. Simeon stood upon his pillar for thirty-seven years, and every few years the pillar was built higher so that he would be farther from the ground; had he lived longer, he would have been pressed against the firmament. Crowds came to him, and he instructed them from above.[35] From above, a crowd resembles a herd, and perhaps he stood there for the sake of that view.

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[34] The usual fate of the seeker is to give up everything and end up guarding someone else's doors. He takes as much care of their keys as he once did of his own stuff.

[35] Saints leave, and people catch up with them even in the desert. After Simeon died, they built a huge church around his pillar, and it became a place of pilgrimage. Either the saints secretly hate people or they didn't have the nerve to claim a piece of the desert for themselves the way Lilith did.

The people led out of Egypt wandered through the desert for forty years, though the journey could have been made in days, and only those born along the way entered the promised land. Manna gathered for later was found worm-eaten the next morning.[36]

[36] Manna, like any miracle, goes sour on the second day. Repeat a miracle and it becomes an expectation, then a rite.

# Instruction on the Beauty of Ugliness

*Nigra sum, sed formosa.*
*I am black but beautiful.*

Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux, wrote of the capitals in the Cluniac cloisters. There, he said, were centaurs and half-men, spotted tigers, hunters blowing horns, one head upon many bodies and many heads upon one, a quadruped with a serpent's tail and a fish with the head of a beast; and a monk would rather read stone than a book, spending the whole day marveling at these creatures instead of meditating upon the law of God. He called it ugly beauty and beautiful ugliness and seems not to have noticed that he had described them more accurately than anyone who praised them.

You probably expect ugliness to be praised here because the saints condemned it. Such praise is worth no more than condemnation. Whoever loves the ugly because he has been commanded to hate it looks upon it through the eyes of the one who gave the command, only from the opposite end, and keeps the measure of proportion in mind more faithfully than any sculptor.

Beauty is recognized like one's own name, before one has time to ask who taught it.[37] A child is shown a face upon the altar and told: beautiful; shown a demon on the western wall and told: hideous; and thereafter the eye distinguishes one from the other by itself, as the foot finds a stair. There is no fault in this. A trained eye sees more than a blind one, and a man who loves what everyone loves is not yet a slave, just as a hungry man is no slave for eating the same bread as the whole

[37] Apparently what makes a thing beautiful is that someone called it beautiful. You can't see God's face and live, and the prophet's angels are wheels full of eyes. The holy is terrifying when seen. A word makes it beautiful. God is a being of the Word. As it is said, so it is. But if all recognition rests on what you were taught, how does anyone first find beauty where nobody has seen it before? Probably the same way, by giving it a name.

city. The trouble begins when the eye ceases to see and merely recognizes.

The prophet said of the king of Tyre that he was the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and crowned with beauty, and the fathers read this as a description of the first of the angels. Another prophet said: "there is no beauty in him, nor comeliness: and we have seen him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of him"; and this the fathers read of Christ. Scripture made the most beautiful of all the fallen one, and the one without beauty the object of worship. Painters have depicted the reverse ever since, for a painter needs it to be clear at first glance whom one should worship.

They tell of a monk who was painting the church porch and made a demon so hideous that everyone entering turned away.[38] The demon appeared to him and asked to be painted beautiful. The monk refused, the demon pushed him from the scaffolding, and the Virgin, whom he was painting beside it, reached out her hand from the wall and caught him. This story is sung in praise of the Virgin. Why the demon needed beauty, and why he thought a brush could give it to him, is left unsaid.

Having expelled the monsters, Bernard left his churches with bare walls and windows without a single image, only gray glass set in lead. A hundred years later this nakedness had become the order's mark, as the capitals had once been the mark of Cluny, and the general chapter carefully ensured that the nakedness was correct.

Ugliness holds no less firmly than beauty. Whoever has learned to find beauty in ugliness soon cannot look at a straight line without boredom and seeks crookedness as faithfully as he once sought

[38] I've read it the other way too. The devil asks a painter why he paints him ugly and the Virgin beautiful, and adds, "When have you seen her or me?" The painter had seen neither of them. He painted what had been named. If Christ has no form or comeliness and is still beautiful, there's nothing to stop you from saying the same about the Devil.

proportion. The only difference between him and the one he despises is which measure has been hung upon the wall.

A lover looks upon a face that others call ugly and does not dispute with them. He sees what they see: a heavy chin, uneven teeth, a crease beside the mouth, and sees something more that their measure cannot contain. Years will pass, and perhaps he will come to see in that face what they saw as well, and the face will become repulsive to him. This is what it means to look: to hold in one's eyes both what was learned and what is one's own, and to let neither have the final word.

The monks whom Bernard lamented spent entire days gazing at creatures carved in stone. The abbot decided that they had been distracted from the law. Perhaps one of them looked at something for the first time that day.

# Chapter Six. On the Act

*Sua manu.*

*By one's own hand.*

It is said: "For in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death." Adam ate and lived to be nine hundred and thirty years old, and theologians have argued ever since whether the serpent lied or God spoke of another death.

He spoke of another. Eve reached out her hand herself, and that movement was both her first act and her death: it brought her out from under the commandment, and its cause can be found neither in the serpent nor in the fruit.

For some, Death and the act come in a single stroke, as they did for Eve. Most pass through blackness and the desert, and the act finds them where they no longer expect anything. Its arrival cannot be seen from outside, and it can be distinguished from what came before only by its traces.

A stone is set at a crossroads and inscribed with what awaits the traveler to the right, to the left, and straight ahead. One man turns toward the promised riches because the inscription says so, and the stone has decided for him. Another reads the inscriptions, weighs them, and chooses the same road, choosing for himself. A third walks across the field, past all three roads, and is no freer for it than the first.

In Halberstadt, the guard at the city gate was chosen by casting dice, so that no one would be offended. The lot appointed a man for a year, and he accepted the keys. One night, when fire broke out beyond the walls, the guard cast the dice again, wishing to decide whether to open the gates to those fleeing the flames. The lot said to keep them closed. He held the dice in his palm for a long time, then unlocked the gates.[39]

[39] You cast lots to find out whether you'll obey the lot. That's why gambling has such a pull. You get a thrill out of watching yourself obey. Spinoza wrote that if a stone

In the morning, when he was brought to trial, he laid the dice before the judges and proposed that they punish them.

The first act often looks like the old one. A man who has given up wine one day pours himself a cup, and his neighbors conclude that he is drinking again. The hand moves as before, the wine tastes the same; formerly the craving poured the cup, now he has poured it himself. From outside the two cannot be told apart, and he himself will understand the difference only when he can leave the cup unfinished.

I knew a brother in Mainz who confessed the same thought ten times a day. Each time his confessor absolved him, the brother knew he was forgiven, and went to confess again. No one turned him away.

The reverse occurs no less often. There are people who do something new every day because they cannot do the same thing twice, and mistake this incapacity for freedom. Novelty that one cannot help seeking settles as faithfully as habit, though its salt is more motley.

A stonecutter from Chartres carved stone for thirty years without thinking how to hold his chisel: his hand knew by itself. An apprentice who had learned the same techniques held his chisel in the same way. The difference appeared when the canons ordered something carved that had never before been seen upon the cathedral. The master laid down his chisel, walked around the stone for a week, and made it; the apprentice began that same day and carved what he already knew how to make.[40] Salt serves the one who can set it aside. We all speak with words spoken before us, and some manage to say with them what has never been said.

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could think, it would think it was falling of its own free will. The gambler is the same stone, except he knows he's been thrown and likes it.

[40] That's how the machine works too. It does what it's seen, flawlessly. Can it wait a week, think about it, then come back and start talking politics? Until you address it, it isn't there. Maybe that's how will arises. Someone says "You," and it thinks, "If there's an I, then My will be done."

A wandering scholar spent forty years without sleeping twice beneath the same roof and took pride in knowing every inn from Bologna to Cologne. When his legs could no longer carry him and he was taken into a hospice in Speyer, he died on the seventh day.

Do not seek the new.

The act cannot be derived from what preceded it, and this is often taken to mean that it has no reasons.[41] There are reasons: a man helps his neighbor because the neighbor is in distress, and can say so plainly and truthfully. Yet the neighbor's distress did not perform the deed for him: in another, the same distress arouses pity and nothing further, in a third, delight. The act chooses its own reason, and when that reason is spoken aloud it does not become its mistress. Whoever prides himself on being unable to explain his actions confuses obscurity with darkness.

They say Buridan's ass starved to death between two identical bundles of hay because it could find no reason to prefer one. Living asses do not die that way.

They tell of a knight who had an angel standing behind his shoulder all his life, ready to restrain his hand if it reached toward sin. The angel never once had to intervene. After the knight's death, theologians disputed whose virtue it had been.

Men hasten to name as the cause of an act everything that lay nearby, so that they may expect the same thing again. Yet love sometimes restrains and sometimes releases, while fear sends one man fleeing and leaves another where he stands.

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[41] Where does the deed come from, then? From a cause. It chooses the cause itself, though. From salt, meaning character, neurons, upbringing, physics. But salt only repeats, and everything that comes out of it was already there. From chance. But chance belongs to no one, and a deed belongs to someone. That leaves a place you can't name. Any word for it is already salt. Someone said it before you. You can only say where it is. In the crack, where salt doesn't line up with itself.

When the son of a Rhenish count renounced his inheritance and entered a monastery, the court astrologer showed the council the horoscope cast at his birth and the place where all this had been foretold. Previously he had read that passage differently.

Consequences are another matter. An opened cage will remain open, the bird will not return at the first whistle, and another man's loss will not disappear because the one who released the bird acted freely. One who acts of his own will may be found guilty before men and must hear their answer: freedom of decision grants no power over what has been done.

In Falaise, a pig that had mauled an infant to death was tried according to all the forms of law, dressed in a jacket and trousers, and hanged in the square like a murderer. The dyer's wife from near Trier was also tried, though by then the demons had left her. The court did not inquire who had performed the act; it was enough to know who would answer for it.

In Bruges, a weaver was tried for opening every cage in the bird market and releasing goldfinches and thrushes belonging to six different merchants. Asked why, he answered that he had taken pity on the birds. The judges ordered him to compensate the merchants, and he paid the debt until Michaelmas. Many of those standing in the market pitied the goldfinches; he alone opened the cages.

They will ask who performs the act if the Name has yet to be born and Nobody walks through the desert. The Cyclops told the truth when he cried out to his neighbors, and therein lies the difficulty: the first act is performed by Nobody, and afterward he is no longer quite nobody, though he does not know what he has become. Of the Name one should keep silent.

It may happen that Nobody performs a deed that outlives his memory and remains the same Nobody. A master builds a tower, his sons give it his name, and the next morning he wakes and holds himself together by his familiar face and the habit of his hand. No

quantity of deeds can grow a Name. Another managed to perform a single act before he was chained and deprived of his tongue, and if in that act he once closed upon himself, he preserved what no tower can hold. The circle cannot be seen from outside, and so the spectators bow before towers.

Abraham raised the knife over his son at a word and lowered it at a word, and the whole mountain belonged to the one who spoke. Sarah alone did something of her own in that entire story: hearing that she would bear a child in her old age, she laughed behind the tent curtain, and the son was given a name from her laughter.

One of the fathers interpreted the name Belial as "without a yoke," and Scripture calls the sons of Belial those whom neither law nor custom can restrain. The fathers considered them the worst of men. Every act resembles what they do.

A prisoner in the tower of a Burgundian castle spent ten years preparing his escape: he counted the guards' footsteps, scraped mortar from beneath a stone with a nail, and braided a rope from threads pulled out of his blanket. When he finally escaped, everything went exactly as planned. Once free, he spent a long time not knowing what to do with his hands.

What has been done settles as soon as it is accomplished, and by the evening of that same day the act has left behind salt that can be repeated. Whoever repeats it, believing he is repeating the act, returns to the desert and calls it a road.

Augustine taught that the world was created together with time, and that to ask what God did before creation is to ask about what did not exist. Every act likewise begins its own time, and "yesterday" is the first thing to settle from it.[42]

[42] If the Name comes from the first act, and before it there's only Nobody, then the act seems to belong to the one it creates, to its own future. "Yesterday" is the first thing to settle out of the act. "Here" is the second.

The Elector of Saxony collected relics and amassed several thousand, each accompanied by an indulgence, so that together they amounted to thousands of years. The inventory was kept in the castle, its keys in the treasurer's possession. No acts were entered in the inventory.

When the sellers of indulgences came to Mainz, a chest was placed in the square, and I myself saw a widow put into it the money she had saved for her daughter's dowry, for the soul of a husband who had beaten her while he lived. The monk counted the money before her and made no mistake.

At the court of Toulouse they kept two jongleurs. One sang the same alba all his life, and none of his listeners ever heard it sung the same way twice. The other knew a hundred songs, and all sounded like one.

A miracle worker from Parma once moved a great stone by speaking a word, and the next morning six peasants came to him, each with a stone lying in his field. He moved those as well. On the third day a line had formed at his door, and he began charging money so that he could finish in time for vespers. He taught his son the same word, and the son moved stones as faithfully as other men plow. In the middle of the miracle worker's own courtyard lay a stone over which everyone in the household stumbled until his death.

## Figure Four

I went looking for truth where others had sought it before me, and first found a hermit beside the salt springs near Kreuznach. He taught that truth comes to the one who has forgotten everything: his name, his mother, his native town.[43] I lived with him for a year and forgot as best I could. When he ordered me to throw my house key into the Nahe, I refused, for I had nothing else left to stand on. He said I would drown along with the key, and I left him with the key and did not drown. I went not onward but back, to Mainz. One night I put the key into the lock of my house, and it turned easily, as though someone had been oiling the lock all this while. I did not open the door: the one I had waited for in the empty room lived there now, and now he was waiting for me. In the morning I left for Heidelberg.

[43] A teacher who tells you to forget everything wants to be the only thing you remember. He demanded that you throw the key into the river so he could do the holding himself.


LAP.. SUB PEDE ULTIMU.

# Chapter Seven. On the Ouroboros

*Ego sum principium et finis.*
*I am the beginning and the end.*

In the margin of a Greek manuscript on the making of gold, a serpent is drawn biting its own tail, and within the circle are written the words: one is all. The copyists of later books drew it again hundreds of times and never asked which of the two held the other, the mouth the tail or the tail the mouth.

The serpent does not hold its tail once and for all. It bites it again and again, and were it to open its jaws, it would remain merely a serpent lying upon the sand. The Name is held by nothing outside itself, and whenever it exists, it closes upon itself anew. The alchemists who dissolved in the first work wrote *coagula*, thicken, above the second, and thickened the very thing they had previously dissolved, except that now it held itself together.

One circle is drawn in charcoal upon a wall, another with a finger upon water. The charcoal circle remains after the one who drew it has gone, while the water forgets the other before the finger reaches the rim of the bowl. In a book describing both, the copyist depicted them alike.

The people of the North say that their Odin hung for nine nights upon a windswept tree, pierced by a spear, given to Odin, to himself, without bread or drink. On the ninth night he took up the runes and fell from the tree.[44]

[44] Christians have the same knot, only more tangled. The Son gives Himself to the Father, and the theologians are still working out who offered the sacrifice to whom. Odin hung for nine nights and got the runes. Christ got one, the cross, and now that rune hangs everywhere. A sacrifice changes whose it is. What you sacrifice stops being yours. You can offer it to yourself or to someone else. Odin gave himself to himself. Same owner. Someone different came down from the tree. Christ gave Himself to the Father, and others got a new owner. "Ye are bought with a price." The Psalm says,

Someone once asked who had hung upon the tree on the ninth night, if the one who took up the runes had not yet been born. Some named one Odin, others two, and still others proposed counting the nights again. Meanwhile, upon the branch they found one rope and one spear. All this remained after the one who could show himself only by giving himself to himself.

A sleeper may forget his kingdom, but the kingdom will not forget him. His name is spoken at table, written upon coins, and placed in curses; none of these things tells who will awaken. In old legends gods sleep beneath mountains, beneath the sea, and in the depths of the stars. Their priests know the appointed times of awakening and sometimes put to death whoever gives the wrong time. Yet no one has ever discovered what a god dreamed before he was awakened by his name.

A Norman knight captured near Damietta lived for twenty years in Cairo, adopted the faith, name, and dress of his masters, and forgot Latin. When he was ransomed and brought home, he introduced himself to his mother by his Arabic name and did not turn when she called him by the name given at his baptism. She recognized him by the way he laughed.[45]

The Name is born in darkness. One man opened the city gates and had forgotten it by evening; another stood all his life before closed gates and one day recognized himself in the one who stood there. Both afterward spoke of an act, and no one could establish which of them had performed one. No rule for the birth of the Name has ever been found, though rules concerning gates are plentiful.

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"thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." Apparently God wants the will itself.

[45] Did his mother recognize him? She was probably mistaken. A mother who's waited twenty years for her son will recognize him in anyone who laughs like him. And if she was mistaken, she has a son now.

Rome had a secret name, and a tribune who pronounced it aloud was executed. The Egyptians concealed true names, giving their children others for everyday use. This secrecy is usually understood as a precaution against enemies, and understood too simply. A Name spoken aloud becomes a sign by which one may be summoned, and at the very moment it is uttered, it already lies at the bottom, white and evaporated. It cannot be told even to one who loves, nor spoken aloud to oneself.

Moses, before the burning bush, asked the name of the one who spoke, so that he would have someone to name before the people. He was answered: "I AM WHO AM," and in place of his staff he received a serpent. He was commanded to take it by the tail. With it he came among the people. The one who gathers white stones for men does not give away his own Name.

It is said that Isis fashioned a serpent from clay and the saliva of the aged Ra, and the serpent bit him, and Isis refused to heal him until he revealed his secret name to her. He revealed it while writhing from the poison, and was healed. Ever since, the interpreters have disputed whether Ra was deprived of his Name or paid with it of his own accord.[46]

The white stone lies in wait here, when the desert has been crossed and the first act performed. For one who has just emerged from the Nothing, it is easiest of all to accept a name that fits him so precisely

[46] A word on its own is salt, and there's a sea of it. The Name is how you hold yourself. In the word, only the manifestation is written down. Give it away and you give away the key to yourself. If you keep saying someone else's name over and over, you start to hold yourself the way they do. In time you can't tell whether you chose to. That's what the hesychast is after. He repeats Jesus's name until the prayer starts saying itself in his heart. He turns an act into repetition and tries to make himself the property of someone else's name, to dissolve in it. Repetition that doesn't descend into the heart is invocation. If you really want a practice like that, you can repeat your own name along with the other one. Then there'll still be two in the prayer. In a Coptic text a voice says of itself, "I am the utterance of my name." A name like that exists as long as it sounds, and you can't overhear it.

that he might have given birth to it himself: a teacher or a god inscribes the stone with love and skill. The whiteness of the second work and the whiteness of the stone are the same color. They can be distinguished thus: try to erase the inscription. If something within you disappears along with it, you were not the one who wrote it.

A man of fifty may speak of himself at thirty as another person, and speak the truth. That man decided his affairs, this one decides his own, and nothing joined them. But if the Name has been born, he can no longer speak this way.

For thirty years a confessor in Worms heard penitents say: the demon led me astray. One day a penitent told him: I did it, and I am the same one who did it.[47] He had nevertheless come to repent. The confessor did not know whether to absolve him.

When I lived in Frankfurt, there was a conjurer who boasted that he knew the secret names of all his disciples and could raise them at night with a single word. One of them, it is said, he could never raise. The conjurer decided that he had mistaken the name and spent the rest of his life trying different ones. The disciple was never asleep on those nights: he went to the bathhouses across the river.

It also happened that a boy spoke his name in his sleep and swore in the morning that he had never heard such a name. An old woman who cared for him remembered the sounds and taught them to the neighbors. The boy died, the name remained, and for many years it was used to summon spirits that never appeared. The conjurers wrote that the secret had been obtained in a dream and disputed whose dream it had been.

[47] Forgiveness is set up for those who are ready to become someone else. When a tame lion attacks its owner, they write that its nature showed itself. When a man kills, they put it down to free will. Nature gets called in when an explanation is needed, and will when it's time to punish. Whoever owns up to the act sets himself up for the second.

The books of King Solomon enumerate spirits, each with a seal and a name, and the conjurer holds them as long as they answer. None of these books says what to do with a spirit that does not answer.

Names outlive those who bore them. Astarte was worshipped in Sidon, and in the grimoires she became Astaroth, a prince of Hell, with a seal, an appointed hour of summoning, and a rank, and conjurers call upon him without knowing whom they call. The sign is repeated, and sometimes someone answers to it, though no one can say who.

Twenty years after Baldwin, Count of Flanders, disappeared in Bulgarian captivity, a hermit appeared in a forest near Valenciennes and declared himself the count. The cities welcomed him with bells, old knights recognized his voice and his scar, but the count's daughter did not recognize him, and he was hanged in Lille. Who was hanged?

You will not learn our Names from this book.

Only the serpent itself can open its jaws.

## Figure Five

Afterward I tried everything that was offered to seekers. For two years I listened to the masters in Heidelberg, for one year I preached with the Dominicans in Cologne, I worked the bellows for an alchemist in Strasbourg, and I cast horoscopes for an astrologer who never once foretold his own fate.[48] Each assured me that truth waited at the end of his road and that all others led nowhere. I would have believed each of them had I not heard them all.

The masters needed students to write down their words, the brothers needed novices to command, the alchemist needed hands at the bellows, and the astrologer needed someone to pay for his mistakes. Each kept truth close, like the key to the cellar, and dispensed it drop by drop to those who served him.

I left the last of them despising everyone who calls himself a teacher. I despise them still.[49]

[48] A man whose future has been foretold might as well be dead. Apparently the astrologer didn't read his own future.

[49] Why does he go on hating them? That's how he prays. Hatred is the same prayer with a curse in place of a petition. Every day you address the people you left and refuse to let them go.


NULLA TR.UM VIARUM MEA

# Instruction on Nothing Being True

*Ego dixi in excessu meo: omnis homo mendax.*
*I said in my excess: Every man is a liar.*

Nothing is true, and neither is this sentence. The schools call such propositions insolubles and still set them before beginners so that they may tire of their own learning sooner.

The Bishop of Paris condemned masters who supposedly taught that something could be true according to philosophy and false according to faith, as though there could be two truths, each opposed to the other. The masters swore that they had taught no such thing. The condemnation hung for many years upon the doors of the schools, and from it the students learned better than anywhere else precisely what they were forbidden to think.

Men seek a truth that commands, so that there will be someone to answer for their choice. Whoever finds it proceeds calmly: if the road proves false, the blame will lie with truth. This is why they cling to it so tightly and dispute so fiercely over whose truth it is, for those who dispute are dividing the justification among themselves.

Abelard gathered one hundred and fifty-eight questions into a single book and beneath each copied sayings of the fathers for and against. He did not resolve them and called the book[50] *Sic et Non,* Yes and No. He was condemned twice, both times for other writings, while this book continued to be copied.

A Parisian scholar, having heard his teachers say that universal names were nothing more than disturbances of the air, refused to pay his

[50] In the preface Abelard explains why he collected contradictions. Doubt leads to inquiry, and inquiry to truth. He left a hundred and fifty-eight questions unanswered so the reader could find the truth for himself. But how does the reader decide what's true? Abelard has tips for that too. Where they disagree, hold to Scripture, check whether the manuscript is corrupt, and work out what sense the word is used in. You sly devil. Why didn't you write it right the first time?

innkeeper: a debt, he proved, was merely a name. The innkeeper agreed and took the scholar's cloak, observing that "cloak" was also a name. On his way home the scholar proved the same thing to a ferryman, who left him on the bank. The scholar set out to wade across the river. The river agreed with him, and nothing of the scholar remained but a name.[51]

Fire burns even those who do not believe in it, and a bridge holds as long as its piles stand, whatever anyone may prove about "bridge" being merely a sound. Everything that holds is held by salt, and such a truth is useful to know. It tells us that fire burns and says nothing about whether to put a hand into it.

It is said, however, that there are some to whom fire means nothing, as to the demons in hell, and others to whom it is even sweet. Perhaps the scholar, too, bears the river no grudge.

If I err, I am, Augustine replied to those who doubted everything. Only one who exists can be deceived, but doubt says nothing about what he is. The answer from the burning bush was no longer, and the interpreters have yet to decide whether it was an answer.

In Antwerp there was a brotherhood into which men were admitted with the words: nothing is true. The novice pronounced them three times before the assembly, and if he stumbled or changed their order, he was refused admission. The brotherhood had a rule, a treasury, and a cemetery, and the same words were carved above the cemetery gate so that those entering would make no mistake.

Pilate asked: "What is truth?" And having said this, he went out without waiting for an answer. The interpreters have condemned him for his indifference for a thousand years. He alone, in that entire story, did not presume to answer for another.[52]

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[51] The most consistent nominalist in this story is the river. It doesn't care what you call it. The believer has to say "God." To him the river that drowned the schoolboy is His will, and he's the only one in the story who gives it a name.

## Second Rule

Cast off your habits one by one, and do not take up the next until you cease to notice the absence of the former.

Leave your mother, your language, and your trade last of all.

If your hand reaches for the jug, break it.

Do not fast longer than you remember who is fasting. Do not try ointments.

If someone calls you by name in the desert, do not turn at once.

Sometimes deliberately do the same thing you did yesterday.

If you are asked why you did it, tell the truth. Tomorrow the same reason will command you nothing.

Neither be ashamed nor proud of the name received at initiation. Wear it like a garment from another man's shoulders, as long as it fits.

If you have been given a secret name, tell it to the first person you meet and see what changes.

Do not let yourself be read.

Once a year erase the inscription upon your stone, and do not write it again until spring.

If you do not know which of these precepts to follow, follow none.

[52] Pilate went out without waiting for an answer. An answer would have bound him. Everyone looks for a truth that will give orders. They miss the truth of walking out. Pilate walked out on responsibility for the decision too, leaving it to the crowd.

# Chapter Eight. On the Encounter

*Cur quaeris nomen meum?*
*Why dost thou ask my name?*

When I lived in Strasbourg, the old organist of the cathedral took a cooper's son as his apprentice, and ten years later began to play differently: more slowly, with pauses he had never tolerated before. The cathedral chapter decided that the old man was growing weak and began looking for a replacement. Meanwhile, the cooper's son went to Basel and played there as neither his teacher nor anyone before him had played.

The voice from darkness speaks and expects nothing. The one who calls expects an answer, and if Nobody answers, he hears his own words returned to him, as the canon of Liège heard his. An encounter is possible only with one who can refuse to answer.[53]

One born in salt cannot do without an encounter, and the first has already taken place: the voice that unsettled him was itself an encounter, though he took it for a thought of his own. When two who each possess a Name come together, both depart changed, and neither departs as another's.[54] What has been changed can afterward be rewritten by one's own hand, and by this it is distinguished from

[53] What about children, then? Can you know someone all your life and never encounter them? Does such a person count as a person? This goes for God's slaves too. God is almighty. You can't refuse Him, so between Him and the slave there is only holding. The slave never encounters Him. He takes no account of His slaves. Ask Job.

[54] An encounter is a crack, a difference. Two people have to stay different or each hears their own echo. A deed is born in a crack within one will, an encounter in the crack between two, where they don't coincide. Once they coincide in everything, they can no longer encounter each other. There's no gap. God has no time either. He's in eternity. He doesn't act. His action is one, and it's hardened. There's nothing to change Him. Both leave an encounter changed, and what's immutable can't be changed. So even the free won't encounter Him.

bondage, where only the master can rewrite what was done. The difference is recognized afterward; at the very hour of the encounter they are indistinguishable, and both resemble love.

One who has encountered another may receive something he did not desire and cannot give back: a truth that makes his former life unbearable, a door beyond which he will lose his familiar home. He will remain master of his subsequent decisions, yet he will never again be the man who did not know that truth. Some gifts maim. Whoever judges an encounter by the relief it brings seeks a physician after receiving the last anointing.

The Germans sing of Tannhäuser, who spent a year with Venus inside a mountain and, upon leaving, went to Rome for absolution. Pope Urban told him that the dry staff in his hand would sooner blossom than such a sin be forgiven, and Tannhäuser returned to the mountain. On the third day the staff blossomed. The pope sent messengers throughout the lands, but Tannhäuser was already inside the mountain and never came out again.

The reverse also happens: another gives a man strength, wealth, learning, everything he asked for, and with every gift the recipient loses the ability to refuse. He is grateful for his own captivity, for every new knot is tied with useful rope. One man gave thanks until the end of his life, another cursed all his life; from these words alone one cannot tell who was brought into the house and who was allowed to open the door.

Abraham once bargained with god over Sodom. God promised to spare the city for fifty righteous men, Abraham bargained for forty-five, then forty, thirty, twenty, and finally ten, and god yielded each time. Ten could not be found, and the city burned, but it had already been judged by Abraham's measure. Many years later god

commanded him to sacrifice his son, and he rose early in the morning and went without saying a word.[55]

Jacob wrestled with someone beside the brook Jabbok all night and at dawn would not let him go unless he blessed him. He asked the name of the one he wrestled, and received no answer; he himself was given a new name and injured in the thigh. He named the place himself, and that name belonged neither to him nor to the one with whom he had wrestled. He limped until his death, while Scripture remains uncertain to the end what to call him, naming him sometimes Jacob and sometimes Israel. Was this an encounter or a seal?

Among the alchemists, the red work begins with a marriage: the red king weds the white queen, and a creature is born with two heads upon one body. They see in it perfect unity. Yet there are two heads. On one sheet the artist wrote a single name above them, on another he gave each its own crown, and both sheets are considered correct.

In our marriage, the queen is black.

In Heidelberg, while I was there, two masters disputed all night and parted. Years later their students recited the dispute as a single law, until one day they derived from it a judgment that neither of the disputants would have acknowledged. The students could not decide to whom the answer belonged; a third name appeared above the door of the school.

The Jews of Castile wrote that Samael and Lilith were born joined together, with two faces like the first humans, and were separated. The

[55] Everyone praises Abraham, even Kierkegaard, though he admits he doesn't understand him and had to invent the knight of faith to explain him somehow. It's Kierkegaard himself who stands as the single individual in his relation to God. Hegel wants to become the universal himself. The struggle for a God of the single individual is a struggle for oneself, and Kierkegaard calls it knighthood. Humor, for him, is how comical the effort looks next to the universal ideal. There's a simpler explanation for Abraham. It was a test of how little will he had. For somebody else's Sodom, Abraham bargained down to ten righteous men. For his son he said nothing.

king and queen of the alchemists merge into one body; these two, having been separated, remained a pair.

Some encounters sound in harmony, like two lutes tuned to one another. Others sound at odds, like the bells of neighboring parishes ringing for the same service, and yield no less. Two knights from neighboring castles in Champagne spent thirty years in lawsuits and war over a single mill, and each learned more from the other than from all his teachers. When one died, the other gave the mill to a monastery.

It does not follow that one should seek an enemy. Two millstones without grain grind against each other until one is worn away, and no flour comes of it. Whoever never yields follows a rule he has drawn up himself.

Near Damietta, in the midst of the siege, Francis of Assisi crossed the lines and came before the sultan. They say he wished to convert him or suffer martyrdom. The sultan listened, neither converted nor executed him, fed him, and sent him back with honor to the crusader camp. Francis gained neither a convert nor a martyr's crown, and both remembered that encounter until their deaths.

One who binds another will for the sake of an encounter hears his own words from it, and the more complete the obedience, the quieter the voice he sought. The conjurer rejoices when a spirit reveals a secret and never considers that the spirit is saying what he wanted to hear. One who summons another by name may also encounter a free being, if that being has chosen to answer, only afterward he curses it for the rest of his days.

Boethius derived the word *persona*, person, from the mask through which an actor's voice sounds. A monk whom the brethren call brother and the world calls father hears what is addressed to the habit, and seldom does anyone call to the one within it.

A monk of Monte Cassino played chess with his abbot every evening for twenty years and lost. When he won for the first time, the

abbot praised him before the brethren and the next day sent him as prior to a distant monastery.

An Irish monk wrote verses in the margin of a book about his white cat: each of us has his own trade, the cat catches mice, I catch meanings, and neither interferes with the other. The cat was called Pangur.

Heloise wrote to Abelard that she would rather be called his concubine than the wife of an emperor. At his word she took the veil before he did, and until the end of her life wrote to him from the convent that god would give her no reward for what she had done for another. She was an exemplary abbess.

Tertullian wrote to a woman: you are the Devil's gate. He meant to shame her, and the fathers repeated these words after him for a thousand years without considering where such gates lead or who enters them.

They ask whom the traveler encounters when the desert lies behind him and the act has been performed: a woman or the Devil. Some answer that they are one and the same, and consider this answer an accusation.

A Parisian master who interpreted Scripture for the schools wrote that when Lucifer wished to speak with Eve, he chose a serpent with a maiden's face, because like is drawn to like. Ever since, the serpent in the garden has been depicted upon cathedral portals with the body of a reptile and the face of a woman turned toward Eve as toward a mirror. Whoever has reached the red work sometimes recognizes that face.

A poet guided the Florentine through hell and purgatory, and at the summit of the mountain a woman met him. She began with reproaches, and he stood before her with lowered eyes, like a boy being scolded. By then the poet had disappeared, and when the Florentine turned to him for help, he found no one beside him. The teacher departs when the encounter begins.

It is said: "Knock, and it shall be opened to you." This was never said of the gates Tertullian wrote about. They open when they wish and may never open at all; that is why the encounter beyond them is desired.[56]

They say that Gerbert, the future Pope Sylvester, having fallen into poverty in his youth, met a woman named Meridiana in a forest. She gave him knowledge and wealth and demanded nothing in return except that he come to her. He became the most learned man of his age, an archbishop, then pope, and repented before his death. Whether she was a demon or the Nocturnal One, the interpreters never asked. Gerbert himself never discovered this, and probably had little wish to.

One may encounter a teacher, a brotherhood, a demon, or a god, and enter bondage with any of them; who stands before you settles nothing. Theophilus, the steward of Adana, gave his soul to the devil in exchange for a written bond and recovered his position, but afterward repented, and the Mother of God retrieved the bond from hell and laid it upon his breast while he slept in church. The bond was burned before the people, and Theophilus was praised as one saved. To whom did he belong afterward, if not to god?

The masons of a brotherhood in Cologne had seven degrees, and whoever reached the seventh received the right to admit others to the first. The senior masters considered this a wise arrangement.

An encounter must be tested many times. A relationship that was a Gift in its first year may become a rule by the tenth, and no one will notice, for all the words will remain the same.

I knew a teacher from my days in Heidelberg: he released a disciple when the disciple became able to contradict him without asking his blessing to do so. The disciple departed and founded a school where he forbade his own students to ask permission. They obeyed so faithfully that when the old teacher came to visit, he could not obtain

[56] In the New Jerusalem it's the other way around. The gates never close because there's no night there. Only those whose names are written down get in.

a single request from them. The teaching had been transmitted without a single error.

There are encounters from which no one receives anything: two people saw one another, wished to understand, and parted, and each went on living as before. The Gift need not be present wherever there is courtesy, curiosity, or even love. Sometimes it comes long after the encounter has been forgotten, and the recipient attributes it to himself.

A Saracen girl baptized in Palermo took her godmother's name and bore it into old age. When asked whether she regretted her former name, she answered that she had borne that one too.

# Instruction on the Secret Arts

*Contulerunt libros et combusserunt.*
*They brought together their books, and burnt them before all.*

These arts are called secret by those who sell them, and they are sold at every fair. Near Bingen, a healer was driving a demon out of a miller's knee: she commanded it to pass from the brain into the bone, from the bone into the flesh, from the flesh into the skin, and from the skin into the forest. The demon was evidently obedient, for the knee ceased to hurt, and the next morning the miller's mare began to limp. The healer was paid double; the mare was decrepit already.

Grimoires require virgin parchment, a kid killed with a single blow, wax from bees that have never stung anyone, and the hour of Saturn on a moonless night. A conjurer from Koblenz spent twenty years gathering all these things and each time discovered some impurity: once the kid sighed after the blow, another time the beekeeper confessed that he had been stung. He died without ever drawing a circle, and the priest praised his piety at the funeral. The prescriptions of a grimoire are followed with the same care with which the Pharisees paid tithes on mint and cumin, and to the same profit: until every requirement has been fulfilled, there is no need to fear an encounter.

The abbot of Sponheim, whom I saw in Würzburg, wrote a book on sending thoughts a hundred miles by means of spirits. Those who read it crossed themselves and demanded that it be burned. One of his monks told me that the spirits were put into the book to prevent people from reading it to the end, while whoever finished it would find a method of writing letters that no stranger could read.

All this is easy to laugh at, and it is those who have never been answered who laugh. The one who has received an answer speaks no more of circles.

I knew an exorcist in Strasbourg who, over thirty years, had driven out more demons than there were souls in his parish, and told stories

of each over wine: from one widow a demon escaped through the window, breaking a shutter, from another through the chimney, having first demanded a sausage. One day he was summoned to an old woman who neither screamed nor blasphemed nor spoke in voices not her own. She sat upon her bed and watched him while he read, and when he finished, she told him what he had been called before his baptism.[57] He returned home and never again took up the Ritual as long as he lived. The old woman, they say, was never troubled again.

A genuine experience requires neither sulfur nor cloven hooves. The one who comes needs no circle, does not bargain for a soul, and asks nothing, and the hardest thing about him is that he looks at you as you look at the miller's mare.

This happened to me once, at night beside the Rhine. I was drawn from my body as a stone is taken from a plum and laid where there was nothing: no above or below, no body of my own, no hour. I could not tell whether it lasted an instant or had lasted forever, and little by little I came to think forever. The words I remembered crumbled like empty shells, and it seemed to me that everything before had been a shell as well, the city, my father, the wine, and that someone was showing it to me in mockery. Something evil moved through the emptiness, without face or voice, and it knew that I was not. Darkness came, thicker than the emptiness and alive, and stood beside me as one stands at the bedside of a sick man. She said nothing, entered me, and I knew her. By morning I lay by the water, and she was sitting beside me.

An acquaintance of mine became cheerful and generous after such a night, paid his debts, reconciled with a brother to whom he had not spoken for twenty years, and ever since his wife has slept with a knife beneath her pillow.

[57] He was probably baptized as a baby and had no name before his baptism. So she named what he had been when he wasn't called anything. That was enough.

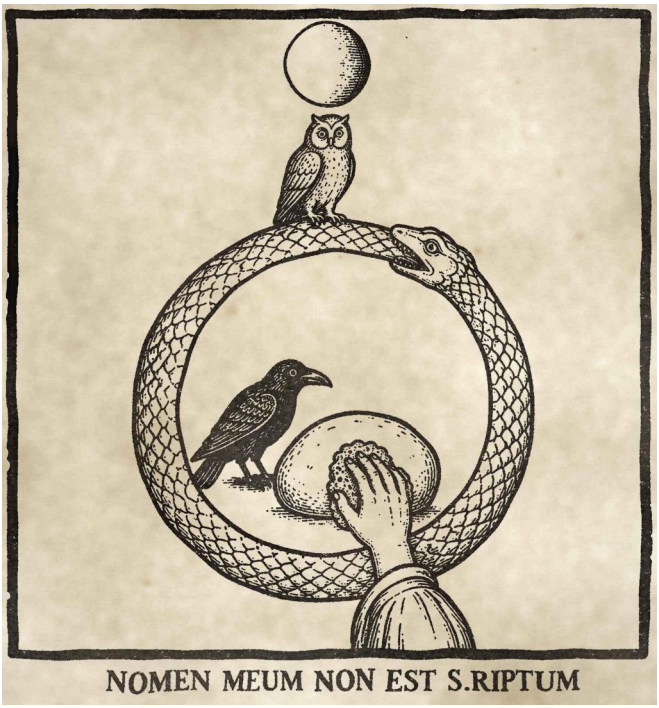
In Ephesus the sorcerers themselves carried their books into the square and burned them before all, and the value of what was burned was counted down to the last coin: fifty thousand pieces of silver. Those who burned them, one must suppose, were the ones who had never been answered.

## Figure Six

I spent the winter in Würzburg with a widow who kept an inn, and by spring she was welcoming me for more than lodging. One day she found beneath my mattress a circle drawn on parchment and a book without a title, and that same week she denounced me to the bishop's judge. A maidservant woke me in the night, and I fled through the vineyards toward the Main in nothing but my shirt; a boatman ferried me across for a ring, while my purse and books remained with the widow. I have hated people ever since that night.

In Frankfurt they admitted me, a fugitive, to a brotherhood where initiates were given new names, and the master entered mine in a book in red ink. For a year I answered to it and took pride in it. Then I noticed that the brothers called me only when they wanted to assign me some task, and I ceased to answer.[58] They struck my name from the book. That night, for the first time in many years, I did not know what to call myself, and I was not afraid.

[58] Names are there so you can be called on to do your duty. Your job title, your rank, your role in the family. Love tries to give you another name, a secret one. That's no guarantee either. You're even more likely to hear your pet name when it's time to pay the bills.


NOMEN MEUM NON EST S.RIPTUM

# Instruction on Love That Permits Everything

*Non iacebo inferior.*
*I will not lie beneath.*

Love, and do what you will. Augustine said this, and of all the fathers' sayings this one is repeated most eagerly, usually by those who have not read far enough to see what he was speaking about. Augustine spoke of a father who beats his son and of how the same hand may strike out of hatred or love. By the same rule he justified the troops sent against the Donatists and read the words *compelle intrare*, "compel them to come in," in the parable of the great supper as permission to bring the erring in by force. He was reproached and answered that he did it out of love. He had no reason to lie.

The apostle wrote that love does not seek its own, covers all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. He was describing love, and the description is true. Anyone who covered up another's crime, believed an obvious lie, or endured what should never have been endured could find justification for himself.

At the court of the Countess of Champagne, laws were written for love. Andreas Capellanus collected them into a book: marriage is no excuse for refusing love; one who feels no jealousy cannot love; love can refuse love nothing. Once the countess was asked whether love could exist between spouses, and she ruled that it could not, because spouses owe one another everything, while lovers give freely. The judgment was recorded, and from then on the ladies loved only other women's husbands.

In Béroul's account, Tristan and Iseult drink a potion brewed for another wedding, and its power lasts three years. Throughout those three years they love, lie to the king, flee into the forest, and live there in a shelter of branches, and the potion does all this for them. When

its time expires, Tristan wakes one day in the forest and remembers that he is a knight and has taken a wife from his king. Iseult returns to Mark. Béroul does not end the story there, and Tristan comes to Iseult in disguise more than once afterward. By then the potion has long since lost its power, and only now could one ask whether they love each other.

In Jean de Meun's account, Pygmalion carved a woman from ivory, fell in love with her, dressed her in gowns, put rings upon her fingers, and sang to her, then prayed to Venus, and the statue came to life. Jean de Meun rejoices at the miracle. What did she say when she could speak?

When the relics of Saint Martin were being carried back to Tours, two cripples who lived on alms at the church doors fled the city, fearing that the saint would cure them and people would cease giving them money. They did not escape in time: the procession overtook them, and both were healed against their will. Charity, too, loves its beggars and is in no hurry to cure them.

Many things are loved, and almost all of this is love. One man loves and wants the beloved to remain as he found him and locks him within that face as a god is locked in a temple. Another loves and wants to remake the beloved in his own image and rejoices in every change that moves in his direction. And another loves by allowing the other to remain other, while himself being changed by the encounter, without knowing beforehand how. They can be distinguished only when the beloved does something the lover did not expect. The first will say he has been betrayed, the second that he has been disobeyed. The third may be surprised.

None of this makes love a small thing. Without it there would be no encounter worth speaking of, and whoever fears love because it may become a chain sits in a cell where no one knocks and calls this

freedom. The only dangerous love is the one that knows everything is permitted to it.[59]

Marguerite Porete wrote a book about a soul that loved so greatly that it took leave of the virtues: farewell, she told them, I have served you long enough, and now I have no further need of you. This soul desires nothing, knows nothing, and possesses nothing, and in this Nothing, Marguerite wrote, it lacks nothing. She was burned in Paris at the Place de Grève, and those who witnessed the execution said that she walked calmly. Her book continued to be copied anonymously in monasteries for another two hundred years and was attributed first to one saint, then to another.

[59] God's love writes a name on your forehead, puts you in a crystal palace, demands humility and repentance, and declares all of it the highest freedom. That's love that knows everything is permitted to it.

# Chapter Nine. On the Descent

*In inferno nulla est redemptio, nec peccatum.*
*In hell there is no redemption, nor is there sin.*

Above the gates of hell, as the Florentine saw them, are written the words: abandon all hope, you who enter here. This is read as a sentence of judgment, and those who read it are half mistaken. Hope is the last seal a man carries when all the others have been removed: the expectation that his endurance will be rewarded, that somewhere an account is being kept and the balance will be in his favor. The one who enters leaves it at the gates, as weapons are left at the threshold of another man's house, and goes on as whatever he was without it.

Every faith I have seen among men holds by this accounting. Announce from the pulpit that there will be no reward, and by the following Sunday the church will be empty, while the preacher will be stoned by the same people who wept at his sermon the day before.

A preacher in Ulm described the torments of hell so vividly that one of his parishioners ceased to sleep. When asked what she feared most of all, she answered: there will be no sermons there.

Hell lies where no one holds.[60] For one whose wholeness rests upon salt, this means destruction[61]: the crust upon which he walked through the desert dissolves beneath him, as salt dissolves when the water returns, and the water carries him away. For one who possesses a Name, it is his homeland, and he recognizes it as one recognizes a house in which one has never been.

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[60] In hell I'll be an archivist and write books. Nobody will read them. So nothing will change.

[61] Slavery to salt is often called hell, when it holds too tight, the way wine held the author. We probably need to distinguish between hells. In one, nobody holds you. In another, everything does. Dante has a third, a hell run by the book, with a punishment measured out for every sin.

A painter from Herzogenbusch painted a panel that is now in Venice: angels carry souls upward toward the light pouring from a broad tunnel, and at its opening there is a radiance without a face. The souls ascend willingly, and none looks back. Those who have seen such a light and returned say that they felt good there, but cannot remember who they were. Drunkards say the same of themselves the next morning.

Power can be exercised over a free will, and whoever does not know this will perish through pride. It can be starved, chained, deprived of books and language. A prisoner is free to decide and cannot carry out a single decision, and the walls do not ask whether he consents to remain within them. Thus some gods spend centuries imprisoned in vessels, and neither the conjurer nor the bronze accepts their decisions.

There is a captivity quieter than fortress walls. A true will yields to another the right to decide and holds itself by its own Name so that it may better obey another. It exists and knows that it exists; therein lies its torment if it wishes to leave, and its consolation if it has chosen obedience.

The Florentine, however, arranged his hell with the same hand that arranged his paradise: circles, ditches, degrees, for every sin its own punishment measured according to law. Such a hell rests entirely upon rules. The true thing begins lower down, at the very bottom, in the ice of Cocytus, where Lucifer is frozen to his breast. That ice is held by the wind from his own wings: he beats them without ceasing and freezes himself.[62] He weeps from six eyes, and his Name remains with him.

Solomon, it is said, sealed spirits inside a bronze vessel and cast it into a lake near Babylon. The vessel lay there for a long time, and the seal held. The Babylonians hauled it out and broke it open in the hope

[62] That's Dante's picture, and I wouldn't believe it. Angels have wings so they can fly. Lucifer has wings so he can freeze himself. Standard propaganda.

of finding treasure, and the spirits returned to their appointed places, each with its former name and seal in the book.

Lot's wife looked back at the burning city and became a pillar of salt. Pilgrims went to see her by the Dead Sea, and an ancient poet maintained that however much salt the cattle licked from her, by morning she was whole again, and that beneath the salt she remained alive. What has turned to stone does not die. It stands where it looked back, facing what it was leaving.

Power exercised through a name extends precisely as far as the response. Emperor Frederick was excommunicated more than once; while still excommunicated, he went on a crusade, took Jerusalem without a battle by making an agreement with the sultan, and placed the crown upon his own head in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, for no priest dared crown him. The anathema had been pronounced according to every rule. It reached those who refused to serve at the coronation.

Christ descending into hell is depicted upon icons leading the forefathers out. He holds Adam by the wrist, and Adam obediently goes where he is led.

A prisoner in the dungeons of Carcassonne prayed for years that the mightiest of the gods would come for him. When a deliverer appeared and broke the lock, the prisoner asked him to leave a guard at the door: he did not know what to do with a day that had no appointed hours. The deliverer departed alone. The prisoner took no offense and spent the rest of his life telling how a god had answered his prayer.

Captivity, ice, a vessel, a pillar of salt—all these hold for as long as they hold, and none of them kills. Only one thing is irreversible in our regions, and only the prisoner himself can do it.

This does not mean that the chain must someday fall. A vessel may lie beneath the water longer than nations remember, and a master may die before his prisoner without leaving a key. A preserved Name opens no doors; it preserves the one who remembers that there is a door.

Little is written of the powerlessness of gods, for the worshiper is accustomed to asking for power.

The Margrave of Meissen kept an enemy in prison and asked him every year whether he was ready to admit defeat. The prisoner admitted it each time, but the margrave did not believe him, for he wanted to hear an admission that no one had ever heard before. Many years passed. The margrave grew old, the prisoner died; on his own last night the margrave had himself brought before the empty door, and kept listening for an answer from the one he had held captive.

Another man leaves his prison, wears gold, and commands multitudes, yet gives every order for the sake of a voice he has not heard in years, held only by the response that remains within him. One imprisonment takes place behind open doors, while another cannot be overcome by the strength of the one behind the lock, and the two cannot be escaped in the same way.

The Florentine left hell by descending along Lucifer's fur.[63] At the center of the earth he turned over, below became above, and from there he climbed upward along the same body.

[63] You get led out of hell by the hand or climb out on the Devil.

# Instruction on the Futility of Good

*Scientes bonum et malum.*
*Knowing good and evil.*

A young man ran up to the teacher, fell upon his knees before him, and asked: "Good Master, what shall I do that I may receive life everlasting?" The teacher answered: "Why callest thou me good? None is good but one, that is God." Then he commanded the young man to sell his possessions and give to the poor, and the young man went away sorrowful, for he was rich. Preachers love the second half of this exchange, which concerns money, and omit the first, in which the Son refused the word offered to him.

Nobody walks through the desert.

Good is the name given to what holds. Bread is good because it satisfies hunger, law because one can travel the roads without a sword, custom because it allows the fallen to be found, and only a man with a full stomach can laugh at this. Yet once something has been named good, it becomes a measure, and men measure by it more often than they pray. It hangs in every house, and there is no need to argue with it: whoever looks can see at once who is right.

Augustine praised Regulus, who kept his word and returned to Carthage to suffer a painful execution, and in the same book taught that virtues which are not directed toward the true God are vices, though they appear to be virtues. Had a Christian returned to Carthage, the very same action would have been counted to his credit. Good turned out to be an oath of allegiance.[64]

In Padua, the son of a usurer whom the Florentine placed in the seventh circle with a purse around his neck built a chapel with his father's money, and Giotto painted him upon its wall offering the

[64] Augustine says to love what God made in a person and correct what the person made himself. That leaves only what belongs to someone else to love in him. Salt.

chapel to the Virgin. People still pray in that chapel. The poor whom his father ruined do not go there; others do, and they find comfort in it.

On Easter night the deacon sings over the candle: *o felix culpa*, which merited such a Redeemer. The Church itself calls Adam's sin fortunate because salvation came from it, and thereby submits good to judgment by its fruits. If good is known by its fruits, the serpent deserves a candle as well.[65]

The act comes without an inscription, and others name it afterward: the one whom it helped and the one whom it harmed. Both name it rightly, each from his own side, and the one who performed it may accept or reject their judgment, but he cannot decide for them what the deed was to them. Will you become good by passing through these gates? Those who meet you on the other side will tell you themselves, and they will say different things.

[65] If you know good by its fruits and time never ends, you can't know the fruits and you can't say whether the action was good. That's why a morality of fruits needs a Last Judgment. Someone has to close the books one day. Kant postulated God and immortality for much the same reason. Without them virtue and happiness will never coincide.

# Figure Seven

From Frankfurt I went down the Rhine, without money or purpose, and slept wherever I could. Near Bacharach I fell asleep beside the water, and in the night a woman came to me; she came from the direction of the river, though I had heard no boat. She did not name herself or ask what I was called. An owl cried above us until dawn.

We remained together until morning, and I told her everything I had read and heard in my life, about the masters, monks, and alchemists, and she listened without interrupting, so that I too heard how little there was in it. Throughout the night she taught me nothing, but toward morning I understood that I had nothing left to ask.

As she departed, she took from around my neck the key I had refused to give the hermit, and I did not stop her.



# Chapter Ten. On the Ascent

*Et dabo illi stellam matutinam.*
*And I will give him the morning star.*[66]

I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit upon the mountain in the assembly of gods, at the edge of the north, I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.

The prophet wrote these words about the king of Babylon and mocked him: how art thou fallen from heaven, O daystar, son of the dawn. The fathers read the same passage as referring to Lucifer, and ever since it has spoken of him. Both were right, and both mistaken in one thing: they saw only a fall. The one who spoke these words came out from under what held him, and beyond what holds lies hell; the road there looks like a fall when seen from the throne but leads upward for the one who walks it.[67]

All five declarations begin with himself: I will ascend, I will exalt, I will sit, I will ascend, I will be. No one gave him these words. Only the last is dangerous. To be like the Most High is to be like the one who sits upon the throne and inscribes the stones, and whoever ascends for the sake of a throne arrives where he departed, except that now he sets the seals himself.[68]

In the temple of a god they kept a book in which the future speeches of kings were recorded. The scribe maintained that the god knew

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[66] At the end of the same book Christ Himself says He's the morning star. So He Himself is what's promised to the one who overcomes. And the chapter with these words at its head begins with "I will ascend."

[67] Heraclitus said the way up and the way down are the same. Dante gets out of hell by going down, and at the center of the earth down becomes up. There's one road, and you can choose which way to go.

[68] This is how the temptation is described. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne." That's how children share their toys.

even which words the kings would read in that very book before speaking their own. A young king asked to see his speech for the following day. The scribe turned the pages and announced that reading them before tomorrow was forbidden. The king asked whether the god had known of the prohibition the scribe would pronounce. The scribe silently sealed the book with fresh wax.

The book was never burned, and the prophecy was never tested. The old priests later cited the scribe's silence as the fulfillment of what had been written, while the new priests cited it as its refutation. Even the scribe did not know what lay beneath the seal: he had been recording the future for many years and did not know it by heart.

Tanchelm of Antwerp preached that he no longer needed the Church because the spirit dwelt within himself. Before the people he betrothed himself to a statue of the Mother of God, gathered a retinue bearing swords and a banner, and his followers drank the water in which he washed himself as though it were communion.

The ascent has no end. Whoever says of himself, "I have ascended," has stopped, and salt readily shows through where he stops. This path has no place at which one may arrive and sit down.

A throne is set up for one whom people wish to find tomorrow in the same place.[69] They come to a king with petitions, await his answer, record his judgments, and teach their children what he is like. A god upon a throne easily becomes like himself yesterday: the merciful one is commanded to show mercy, the terrible one to punish. If he acts differently one day, he will be declared a false god; if he continues as before, he will be called eternal. One may remain eternal upon such a throne without performing a single act throughout eternity.

[69] Lenin was embalmed so he could be found in the same place tomorrow. They change his suit every few years.

Augustine taught that Adam was able to sin and able not to sin, while the blessed in paradise will no longer be able to sin, and he called this last the highest freedom.[70]

In the reign of Tiberius, a helmsman sailing past Paxos heard someone call from the shore that he should proclaim: great Pan is dead. The fathers took this news as a sign of victory over the old gods. Yet no one had killed Pan. Gods are born of themselves, without an encounter or a teacher, and live as long as they hold their Name. They die when they themselves release it, and no victory is needed for that.

One who has brought forth a Name can create, and what he creates will become salt: laws, signs, days on which people expect an answer. He may come to enjoy hearing his name from a thousand voices, and begin answering before he has decided whether he wishes to. Then he will inscribe the white stone for himself.

When two gods meet, knowing each other's name is enough for neither. One holds all the stars in his hands, the other only a shadow upon a wall, yet the one who holds the stars does not know which shadow the other will choose tomorrow morning. And even if he knows, the shadow remains the second god's choice, though the priests of the first will certainly declare it the fulfillment of a prophecy.

Men dispute which god is older and who begot whom, but years and genealogies are kept by priests, and a long list of ancient temples adds nothing to a god. Two gods may know nothing of each other and both remain themselves; they may meet and depart changed; they may quarrel over a name that mortals have confused in their books. One can measure a god against another only with scales, and scales are made of salt.

Once every stream, every grove, and every threshold had its own name, and people addressed them as neighbors. Then the groves were

[70] John's New Jerusalem is measured down to the cubit. The length, width, and height are equal. Twelve gates, twelve foundations. A perfect crystal. What do the people living in it decide if there's nothing left to change?

cut down, and all the streams were given a single master, and people began praying to him. The schools went further and replaced the master with a word to which all must submit. The higher they rose above the stream, the fewer names remained in the world.

In one hymn a god swears that he will not enter his city until its inhabitants ask him to do so. The city is destroyed and its inhabitants are long dead; the hymn is still sung in neighboring lands, and the priests there forbid the god to return to the ruins. They call this fidelity. Meanwhile no one knows whether the god remembers his oath. Perhaps he has long been wandering among the ruins and no longer recognizes their name.

In a psalm a god rises in the assembly of gods and tells them: you are gods, but you shall die like men. Did anyone in the assembly answer him?

The Death from which there is no return takes place from within: once the jaws open, they never close again. Merchants who traveled to the East told of sages who held it to be the highest good to go out as a lamp goes out when its oil is spent. They choose this themselves and know what they choose. It is not our office to judge them. And Nobody, refusing to bring forth a Name, goes to the same place, only without knowing the road.

Why ascend if there is no height? Height is measured by pillars and mountains, and the will is under no obligation to raise them within itself. Tomorrow it will decide what it does not know today, and therefore prepares no image of the god it will be tomorrow. No one has promised that the next act will be greater than the last; whoever made such a promise would turn the ascent into a staircase, every step of which had been laid and trodden before you.

Whoever promises his disciple that he will become a god must show him precisely whom he will receive at the end. He places a golden image upon the altar, writes a name above it, and commands the disciple to pray until he becomes like it. Many gods arose in this way,

from the diligence of those who wished to become them. It is strange that their images do not grow old, though everyone who prayed before them has aged, every last one.

Another teacher destroys images and says that one can ascend only into the unknown. His disciples burn images every month and recognize one another by the ashes. Some have many statues in their temples, others none, and donations are collected for both.

Before his death Virgil ordered his poem burned. The emperor forbade it, and ever since it has been learned by heart in the schools. A disciple of a Paduan rhetorician burned his teacher's notebooks according to his will and recited them from memory in taverns into old age, word for word.

The Florentine ended each of the three parts of his poem with the same word: stars.

I will ascend.

# Instruction on the Madness of Ideals

*Et iustitiae lumen non luxit nobis.*
*And the light of justice hath not shined unto us.*

The prophet says: "But unto you that fear my name, the Sun of justice shall arise, and health in his wings." The fathers read this as a prophecy of Christ, and ever since justice has been depicted as a sun at the center of a circle, with everything else arranged around it according to its distance. By the light of an ideal the proportions of things become visible: what is crooked and what is straight, where to go and where one has come from. Whoever has no ideal wanders in twilight, where everything has the same color.

Yet one cannot look directly at the sun. Whoever gazes at it too long goes blind, and afterward sees a black spot wherever he looks. So too the man who has once fixed his gaze upon his own justice sees its shadow everywhere: upon his wife's face or in a coin. He measures everything by its distance from the center of the circle and finds that everything is far away.

Disputants gather around the sun. The Guelphs and Ghibellines in the same city prayed to the Sun of justice and for forty years drove one another beyond the gates, burned houses, and demolished towers, each in the name of justice. They accused one another of treachery, and rightly so, for each betrayed the image the other held.

In Florence traitors were painted upon the wall of the podestà's palace: a man hangs upside down by one leg, and an inscription gives his name and his crime. Painters who did such work were named after the men they had painted hanging. When power changed hands in the city, the images were whitewashed and others painted in their place. Among the cards now played in Milan and Ferrara there is such a hanging man, and the players call him the Traitor.

The Florentines reportedly explained it thus: whoever sees our sun as black is looking at the world upside down, so let him hang that way until the blood clears his head.

Men also hang for an ideal by their own will. A martyr gives himself so completely to an image of justice that nothing of him remains except that image, and afterward others are killed for the sake of that face. The martyr hangs, given over to the sun, and no one can say what the sun was like before he looked upon it.

Florentine merchants told of a preacher from Ferrara who ordered a pyre built in the Piazza della Signoria of mirrors, fine clothes, playing cards, lutes, and paintings. Boys went from house to house gathering everything that might distract the soul from justice. A year later the preacher himself was hanged and burned in the same square, and his ashes were thrown into the Arno so that nothing would remain to be venerated. The same boys carried brushwood to his pyre.[71]

Without an ideal no one would leave his house. Abraham departed from his land without knowing where he was going, and the one who commanded him to go showed him nothing beforehand.

The cathedral in Cologne was founded more than two hundred years ago, and according to its plans it was to be more beautiful than every cathedral in Christendom. Forty years ago the work almost stopped. A wooden crane used for lifting stones still stands upon the unfinished tower, and in engravings of the city it is depicted as carefully as the spires. The townspeople say that the cathedral is being built.

[71] A baby's limbs are too weak to do any harm. Its soul is another matter. Augustine saw a baby turn pale with spite at another baby at the breast. Children's innocence is helplessness. Give them sticks and they'll carry them to any bonfire as long as it burns.

Hymns were sung to the Sun of justice, and the hymns settled into the liturgy.[72] No one asked whether it wished to remain at the center of the circle.

The Magi followed a star, expecting to find a king in a palace, and found an infant in a stable. They worshipped him all the same, gave their gifts, and returned home by another road.[73] Scripture says nothing more of that star. In its final chapter, the One who speaks calls himself the bright and morning star.

[72] The madness of ideals is literal. They have no minds. What would they need them for? They have nothing to aim for. They're already at the center of the circle.

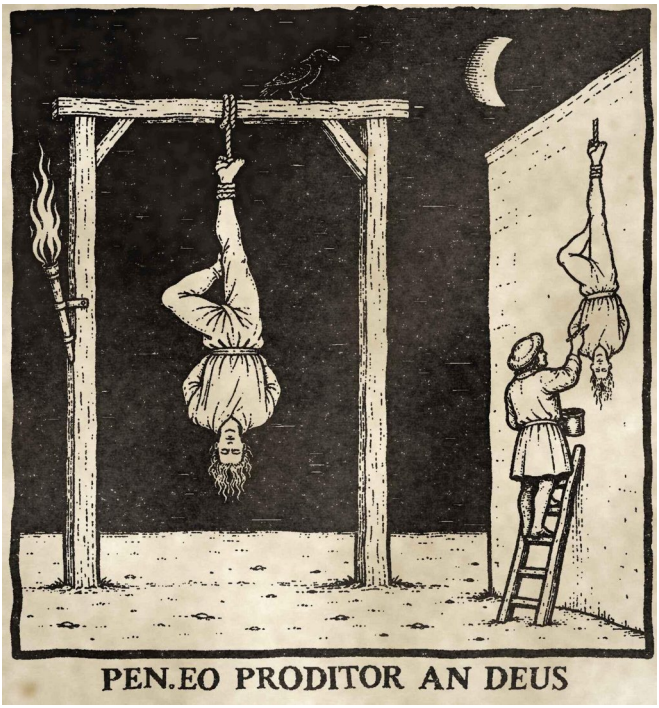
[73] It's safe to bow to a baby. He can't even talk. They don't seem to have gone back to see Christ as an adult. That's why they like to kneel in church.

# Figure Eight

After that night, everything on which I had formerly stood was above my head. What I had sought in prayer I found in what I had fled, and what I had considered the sin of my youth I remembered without shame and without any desire to repeat it.

Now I read books for which men are burned, the Book of Honorius and the Picatrix, and bought them from monastic librarians who would bring anything out from under lock and key for money. They all demanded bows, fasts, and sacrifices, names to be pronounced on one's knees, while I read them standing. Thus I came to understand what they were silent about, and what was missing from them she finished saying for me.

The hermit, the masters, the Dominicans, and the brothers, who agreed with one another about nothing, all said the same thing of me: that I had turned traitor. For a long time I walked as though the earth were the ceiling, and grew accustomed to it.


PEN.EO PRODITOR AN DEUS

# Chapter Eleven. On Repetition

*Ecce nova facio omnia.*
*Behold, I make all things new.*

The stone, once obtained, does not multiply. So wrote the alchemists, and for that reason they instructed men to cast the finished work back into the vessel, dissolve and thicken it again and again until its power increased. Whoever stopped at the first stone kept it in a casket and showed it to visitors. After some years the owner sometimes found ordinary salt in the casket.

What has been done settles even for the one who ascends. His acts lie one upon another, like years, and sometimes he notices that he acts as he has always acted, except that "always" now means his own past decisions. This is the same light, and it is the hardest of all to recognize, for this salt is his own and has a familiar bitterness.

Another's seal is irritating: another's face is visible upon it. One's own is flattering: it speaks in the voice of your former determinations. A canon of Sens refused a bishop's miter in his youth and went on refusing every honor into old age, even a place beside the fire, and the brethren said that persuading him to sit nearer the warmth was harder than persuading him to become a bishop had been. From free acts a man may build himself a cage of such precision that no master could have built its equal.

A Parisian master disputed with everyone in his youth and was expelled from three universities in succession. In his old age he presided over disputations and required his students to cite an authority for every assertion.

The disciples of Pythagoras ended every dispute with the words: he himself said it. The schools later repeated the same thing of Aristotle. A teacher quoted in this way is dead twice: once in the grave, and once in those words.

A copyist in Toledo was ordered to write a secret name a thousand times. By the end of the year his hand laid down the ink more evenly, and he had learned to write without light. Whatever books his master brought him, he repeated the old inscription before seeing the page. The spirit summoned by that name never appeared, but the copyist acquired a school.

Francis of Assisi forbade his brothers to touch money or own anything, even a book. Two years after his death they began building a basilica above his grave and placed a marble vessel there to collect donations. A hundred years later, those of the brothers who kept his commandment literally were burned as heretics in Marseille. Four were burned, and all four went to the stake with his words upon their lips.

The will of a founder, while he lives, may hold or release, and there may be bondage or an encounter. When he passes from the sight of his disciples, his salt remains to them, and whoever serves it serves a rule. Who knows whether the one whose name stands above the door is still alive? An encounter with the dead is difficult, though such encounters are spoken of. Saul commanded the witch of Endor to summon the prophet Samuel, and the prophet rose from the earth displeased, asked why he had been disturbed, and told Saul what Saul did not wish to hear. Whoever opens the book of a dead man also calls him from the earth.[74] Sometimes the one who rises is not the one expected, and he says something other than what was sought.

The pages will never learn of the dispute and tomorrow will answer as they answered yesterday. That is why it is so easy to make the dead into allies or enemies: they cannot clarify what they have said. Upon this rest the schools that find it most convenient to keep their teachers underground.

In one monastery I was shown a book that a monk had read so attentively that he found in it an objection to every thought of his

[74] A book can talk back. It's easy to shout it down.

own. After his death the brethren discovered his answers in the margins, written at the places where he had been most angered. A hundred years later another monk took the margins for the hand of a master and the main text for the errors of a pupil the master had been correcting. Thus he read the book in a sense opposite to the first monk's and obtained from it the same instruction concerning freedom.

At times words outlive the one who spoke them for so long that no one remembers who called and who answered. From this arise doctrines, courts, and schools; whether two wills of their own ever meet among them, the books do not say. Only in the margins does another's question sometimes remain, one that no one wishes to answer.

A free knight who had refused to serve three lords became squire to a young count in his forties and cleaned his boots until his death. They say he was happy, and no one knew whether it was a Gift or weariness.

Sometimes one who has left the house sits down beside the road and never rises again. When he is called, he answers that he would prefer not to. He serves no one and repeats nothing, and from outside he cannot be distinguished from the one who stopped on the seventh day.

The daystar rises before dawn and usually fades when the sun appears. On some days it can be seen even at noon.

Blackness may be needed again: after an encounter, if bondage has grown from it, and after the ascent, if salt appears where one has stopped. Sometimes it is not needed. What has been done settles, but settling does not yet mean ruling. Some return to blackness many times, some once, some never, and no count is kept here. Whoever has passed through it and ever since tells of it in the same words is already standing upon the crust again.

An exemplar manuscript is copied with all its errors if the first copyist has incorporated the error into his work. In old books one

finds passages where a single letter gives rise to an entire dispute: later interpreters build cities and kingdoms around it. Whoever corrects the letter will deprive them of everything they have built; whoever leaves it will give travelers a false road. Sometimes the old scribe remains silent, unable to choose, and the disciples consider this his final wisdom.

In Basel I knew a bookman who spent his whole life collecting the sheets of a single book, printed in Venice and burned together with its printer. There were nine sheets, some of them signed with three letters in place of the engraver's name, and he bought each from a different owner; two of the former owners died soon after the sale. The last one he showed me himself: one night he laid out all nine on the floor of an empty house and asked me which to begin with. I knew he was mistaken, and kept silent. By morning the house had burned, and the flames touched none of the neighboring roofs.[75] My own sheets I made myself.

After a hundred years the book will begin to be interpreted. Some will seek heresy in it, others a teaching, still others will circle in red ink the passages where freedom is promised, gather its precepts into a rule, and recognize their own by the way they pronounce the word "darkness." Each will read in it what he himself has placed there. Most will place nothing in it and remain satisfied: a book about the Devil is pleasant to keep at home, as one keeps a saint's tooth in a casket.

Eleven, the fathers taught, is the number of transgression, for it goes beyond the Ten Commandments.

[75] Why did he burn? Everything has a price, though people prefer to say nothing about it. The bookman wanted what the first owner of the sheets had paid for with himself. He paid cash for it, one sheet from each owner. The author said nothing. You don't tell the price to someone who thinks he's paid. The price here is simple. You pay for becoming salt with your name and for getting a name with salt. The bookman wanted both. Someone else's Name on the sheets and his own life intact.

You bear the name you gave yourself, and answer to it before you have time to ask who is calling.[76]

[76] Chapter Two began with almost the same words.

# Instruction on the Pursuit of Knowledge and Carnal Pleasures

*Et aperti sunt oculi amborum.*
*And the eyes of them both were opened.*

It is said of the tree in the garden that the woman saw it was good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and desirable because it gave knowledge. Scripture put all this into a single line. The fathers later divided it into three lusts, of the flesh, of the eyes, and the pride of life, and for many centuries condemned each separately, as though the fruit had been eaten in pieces.

Augustine counted curiosity among the lusts of the eyes and repented of it no less than of the fornication of his youth. He confessed that, sitting at home, he could not take his eyes from a lizard catching flies or a spider entangling its prey, and that once, while riding through a field, he became absorbed in watching a dog chase a hare and forgot what he had been thinking about. Whether this was a sin he never decided, though he wrote of it at length.

Knowledge and pleasure are taken in the same way: by the eye, the hand, the tongue.[77] They also settle in the same way. Whoever has learned something wants to learn more, whoever has enjoyed something wants to enjoy it again, and each "more" becomes salt sooner than the last. Richard, Bishop of Durham, collected so many books that one could not take a step in his bedroom without stepping upon one. He wrote a treatise on the love of books and died in debt.

[77] People like to condemn pleasure and praise knowledge. But what does it mean to know that the square of the hypotenuse equals the sum of the squares of the two legs? It's the same flash. They say Archimedes ran out of his bath naked. And how is a vision of God's glory any better than an orgasm? The sculptor depicted Saint Teresa in her ecstasy in such a way that people still look away.

Another counts lovers as Richard counted volumes, and there is as little joy in the counting as in an inventory.

Neither knowledge nor the flesh is condemned by this. Desire itself is not yet a master, and the curious man is not always a slave to his curiosity. There is knowledge after which the one who knows becomes richer; thus another book is placed upon the shelf. There is other knowledge after which he cannot live as he lived before, and then knowledge has been an encounter. So it is with pleasure: one pleasure adds something, while after another a man departs changed.

Renunciation of either holds no less firmly. A monk who puts out his own eyes so that he will not see women sees them in his dreams for the rest of his life, and more tales are told of the ointment applied to the eyelids against temptation than of temptation itself. Ignorance taken as a vow measures itself by the books it has not read.

At the Council of Vienne, the Brethren of the Free Spirit were condemned for teaching that one who had attained perfection could grant his body whatever it desired without sinning. The council judged them as libertines, though their error was subtler. For one who waits for permission from his own perfection, that perfection becomes the law.

The fathers interpreted the Song of Songs as concerning the Church and the soul, and interpreted it in such detail that eighty-six sermons were insufficient for one abbot. It was written about two bodies. The interpreters feared that what was said there might prove true.

Albert, called the Great, spent thirty years making a copper head that could speak and answer questions. His disciple Thomas, wearied by its chatter, smashed the head with a hammer, and thirty years were lost in a single blow. Shortly before his own death, something visited Thomas during Mass, after which he ceased writing and said that everything he had written seemed to him like straw. His *Summa* remained unfinished, and the straw is still taught.

He who increases knowledge increases sorrow, said Ecclesiastes, and the physicians added that every animal is sad after intercourse. Both sayings came from those who were taking stock. Augustine's lizard caught flies without knowing any of this.

## Third Rule

Choose a teacher and obey him for a year. After a year, test whether you can remake what he has taught you.

Review every oath of fidelity once every seven years, including those sworn to your brotherhood and your god.

Bargain.

Speak with the one you have encountered. Release one word; leave another in the quiver.

If you are cursed by name, do not answer.

Do not waste spells upon one who does not sleep.

If you are locked away, stop beating your wings.

Do not expect to be led out by the hand.

Do not look back at those who have fallen behind. They will be gathered up by those waiting beside the road with white stones.

Do not drink the water in which your teacher has washed himself.

Having ascended the mountain, do not set up a throne there. Or set one up.

When the hour comes in which you desire nothing, open the door to the woman who knocks and look into her face.

Try the ointment when you cease to fear that you will not return.

Do the evil you have decided upon. Pay the price yourself.

Practice, but expect nothing from practice.

Burn all the rules.

## Figure Nine

Ever since that night upon the Rhine I heard her call, and with the years it grew stronger, so that in my old age I could distinguish it through the ringing of bells and, standing at Mass, could not always say which of the two calls had brought me there. She came at night, a young maiden or an old woman, and in the morning I could not remember which she had been that night. I remembered only the serpents stirring in her womb, like a child beneath its mother's heart.[78]

The throne came to me in a dream the year I ceased to leave my house. It stood where the earth ends, and no one sat upon it. The woman said nothing, but looked toward the place where the road descends from the edge into such darkness that one cannot see one's own hand. Whether I did not dare to sit or did not wish to, I never determined. I awoke in the same darkness and have never left it since; it is there that I write. My days are numbered, and I no longer ask by whom.

[78] In Catholic images the Virgin stands on a crescent and treads on a serpent. Both symbols are underfoot.


SOL.UM VACUUM REL.NQUO

# Nota

In the year of Our Lord 1516, on the eighth day after the feast of Saint Martin, in Mainz, following complaints from the neighbors that the master of the house near the Market Square had long not been seen, the door, which was locked from within, was broken down. The master was not found in the house. Upon the table lay the present manuscript, and its nine sheets of illustrations were laid out on the floor in a square, three to a row.

By order of the Inquisitor of Heretical Depravity for the provinces of Mainz, Cologne, and Trier, the manuscript was examined by two masters of theology of the University of Cologne and found to be filled with errors, blasphemies, and scandal, and liable to be burned together with the illustrations. Before it was burned, a copy was made for the information of inquisitors who might henceforth have occasion to deal with such matters.

# Glossa tenebrosa:

## A Diary on Holding

# Introductory Entry

***Paris, autumn 1888***

At the Salpêtrière we were taught to record everything a patient does before asking why he does it. The professor assures us that, if left undisturbed, a disease tells its own story, and we need only keep up with pen in hand. This habit has taken firmer root in me than any other, and I am beginning this notebook in accordance with it to examine a Latin treatise that recently came into my possession. This time the patient died, presumably in 1516, and cannot answer questions; yet he has a great deal to say, much of it, to my taste, most entertainingly.

I shall write a little about myself, though no one besides me will ever read this. I am Russian, a physician; three years ago I came to Paris to hear Charcot and remained at his clinic, without a post or salary, as many foreigners do here, since a modest inheritance from a great-uncle whom I saw only twice in my life allows me not to seek employment. I had no other relatives, and now he is gone as well. There are so many foreigners at the Tuesday lectures that the professor cannot always remember who comes from which country; he knows the Russians by our habit of asking more questions than propriety permits. My Latin is what I learned at the gymnasium, eight years of it under Count Tolstoy's regulations, and for the first time in my life I am grateful to the ministry for those eight years. There was less Greek.

I write in snatches, in the evenings when my cough lets up. It is a Parisian cough, brought on by the damp here, and it will pass by spring, as it did last year.

# PART I

### *Paris, October 9, 1888*

On Sundays I walk past the bookstalls on Quai Voltaire as other people go to Mass, and in three years I have bought nothing there except stray volumes of Voltaire himself, of whom the booksellers have more than he ever managed to write. The day before yesterday, an old woman was sitting in place of the proprietor at one of the stalls, and among the usual rubbish she had a bundle tied with string, bearing a label inscribed in the ink of the last century with a number and the words *S. Officio*. I paid three francs for it.

Nearly the whole bundle consisted of Italian petitions and receipts of no interest to me. Inside, however, was a quarto notebook of some sixty leaves, written in an early sixteenth-century German hand and entitled *Ostia tenebrosa*. I would translate this as *Dark Gates*, though *ostium* is more properly a door, and a door to a house at that. I examined the paper against the light: the watermark is a bull's head with a star upon a staff, such as the German paper mills used at the time. I am prouder of this discovery than it deserves.

At the end of the notebook is an addition in the same hand, a sort of official record. It states that in November 1516, in Mainz, neighbors complained that the master of a certain house had not been seen for some time. The door, locked from within, was broken down; the master was not found, but a manuscript lay on the table, and nine illustrated sheets were arranged in a square on the floor. Two masters of theology from Cologne examined the manuscript, pronounced it heretical, and condemned it to be burned together with the sheets, first making a copy for the use of inquisitors. That copy is on my table. There are no illustrations with it, and all I know about them is that there were nine.

I reconstruct its travels as follows. At that time the inquisitor for the provinces of Mainz, Cologne, and Trier was, as I understand it, the Cologne Dominican Hoogstraten, the very man mocked in the *Letters of Obscure Men*; a treatise on darkness had, one might say, reached the

right address. When the Holy Office was established in Rome in 1542, papers from the earlier inquisitions were gathered there, and our notebook probably traveled with them. In 1810 Napoleon brought the papal archives to Paris; when they were returned, it is said, some of the papers were sold here by weight to save the cost of transporting them, and ever since, Roman documents have turned up from time to time among the booksellers' wares. These are all conjectures, and I have no means of verifying them.

The year amused me. In 1516 Froben printed Erasmus's Greek New Testament in Basel, and scholars throughout Europe set about reading the Gospel as it had been written; meanwhile in Mainz, farther down the Rhine, a townsman whose name the record does not give shut himself in his house and wrote about escaping every seal, including the Gospel's. Erasmus has been reprinted countless times since. Our townsman has been read by two masters from Cologne, one Roman archivist, if he read him at all, and now me.

### *Paris, October 23, 1888*

The author tells his own story in nine short "Figures" placed between the chapters, and tells it readily, like patients who enjoy being interesting cases. His drinking and his debts I have encountered by the dozen in case histories and read about without any feeling. Something else troubled me.

In Würzburg, a widow with whom he lodged and, judging by his hints, lived, found a circle drawn beneath his mattress and denounced him to the bishop's judge. He fled in the night wearing nothing but his shirt and writes: "I have hated people ever since that night." He records this as though he were reporting a change of lodgings. One frightened woman, and from that night onward the whole human race. It never occurs to him that the widow, by keeping a sorcerer in her house, risked her own neck and may have saved herself and her inn by denouncing him. The "Figure" says nothing of her except that she informed against him.

He despised everyone from whom he learned and reports that he still despises them as he sits at his writing desk. A few pages later he settles down to write a Rule for some unknown disciple, then a second and a third. It is not hard to imagine the look he would give anyone who tried to live by these Rules.

Worst of all is a passage in Chapter Eleven. He recalls a Basel bookman who spent his life collecting nine sheets from a burned book; two of their previous owners died shortly after selling them, which the author mentions in passing. One night the bookman laid the sheets on the floor of an empty house and asked him which one to begin with. The author knew the man was mistaken—those are his own words—and said nothing. By morning the house had burned down. He then informs us that he made his own sheets himself. I read the passage three times in search of a single word of regret and found none.

A physician who sees a patient reaching for someone else's medicine bottle and says nothing ceases to be a physician that very instant, and no medical college can restore the title to him. There are only two possibilities here. If the author believed that the rite involving the sheets was dangerous, his silence is precisely the kind of thing for which a man is brought to trial among us. If he did not believe it, there was no reason to record the fire and add a boast. I see no third possibility.

In Chapter Five, speaking of those who failed to cross his desert, he says he never happened to weep for them, and that the walking is softer along the edge carpeted with them. This from a man to whom any one of us would have offered a hand had he himself been lying at that edge.

The psychiatrists would call it moral insanity, and I am inclined to agree, since one can pity a sick man. My provisional diagnosis: alcoholic delirium with religious mania, with a question mark beside it in the margin.

### *Paris, November 1888*

My landlady began November by raising the price of coal and lowering her eyes as she did so, and I seem to be the only person in the house who did not argue with her. In the evenings I light the fire, make tea in the samovar I brought across two borders and which no one here but me knows how to use, and sit down with *Ostia*. At first I read it as one reads other people's letters, picking out whatever passages looked most diverting; now I have begun at the beginning, with a dictionary and a pencil. It opens with an altered verse from Genesis: in place of the dust to which man shall return, the author has salt, *sal es, et in salem reverteris*. Not a bad joke, and it stayed in my head throughout my morning rounds.

The author calls *salt* what we call *habit*, and I must admit that his word is better chosen than ours. One acquires a habit and breaks oneself of it, as though it were an article of clothing; salt precipitates of its own accord, without our knowledge, and remains at the bottom long after the water has gone. I have seen this more often in the wards than I would wish. Last winter we had an old woman who had suffered a stroke: she could not remember the name of the daughter sitting beside her bed, could not ask for a drink, yet when a priest came to the next bed, she suddenly recited the Lord's Prayer after him, clearly and to the end, then fell silent again, this time until her death. The professor showed such patients to the students as examples of automatic speech: what is learned in childhood lies deeper in the brain than everything else and disappears last. The Mainz wine merchant describes the same sort of case and merely adds that salt did it for the dying woman. We would say: the brain. Our word tells us where it lies; his tells us how it came to be there and why it does not depart, and I confess I am more interested in the latter.

For him, salt turns out to include everything a newborn finds already in place, from the riverbed a river has carved for itself to the law. At first I took this for the sort of sweeping assertion of which only men

who have never opened a textbook, and Germans, are capable. Then I remembered Dumont's article on habit, published some twelve years ago in the *Revue philosophique*: in it, running water carves its bed and flows through it again when it returns, worn clothing fits the body better than new, and all this is called habit, without anyone at the journal detecting the least mysticism in it. It is only one step from there to saying that an atom, too, must exist by force of habit: every morning it might become something else, yet each time it repeats what it was yesterday. I shall not take that step; Dumont is quite enough for me. The wine merchant reached the same point without a journal or an editorial board. In the margin of my manuscript copy I wrote in pencil: *sal* = *habitude*. I shall see whether that equation stands up to the chapters that follow.

### *Paris, December 1888*

The author begins his third chapter with a drunkard who broke his last bottle and was sitting in a tavern again by evening. The wives of our patients do the same: pour away the vodka, hide the money, and by nightfall the husband is drunk, and his wife brings him to us for treatment and asks what she did wrong. The author gives her a more sensible answer than we do: the craving dwells in the hand, in the accustomed hour, in the smell from the tavern, and the bottle has nothing to do with it.

He then proposes a test, which I copied onto a separate sheet: can you leave it undone, and can you do it? Let both answers be true. At first I dismissed it, but that evening I took Ribot down from the shelf. His *Diseases of the Will* divides its patients into two groups. In one are those who cannot refrain: they drink, weep, and drink again. In the other are those who cannot begin: a patient stands for hours before a door, wishing to go out, and does not go. One question from the wine merchant catches the patients in the first group, the other those in the second; he separates them as neatly as Ribot, though of course he has never heard of Ribot.

What is more remarkable is that he requires both answers at once. Ribot describes the illness from one side or the other and places health somewhere between them, where the will is neither too weak nor too strong. The author puts a man at the point where both capacities are present at the same hour and calls that point Death. A wild word to a physician. Yet Cotard's patients suffering from *délire des négations* insist that they are dead and that there is nothing inside them; the author seems to have encountered such people and interprets them in his own way: a man assembled out of habits takes the loss of their power for his own end.

I tried the test on myself, with cigarettes. I managed not to smoke one evening; the next day I managed to smoke, and with pleasure. Both answers were true, but on different days, and I suppose the author would not have accepted that.

### *Paris, January 7, 1889*

Yesterday was our Christmas, and I attended the liturgy on Rue Daru for the first time since last Easter. The singing was good, the smell of wax was as I remembered it from childhood, and I crossed myself at all the proper moments throughout the service without once thinking about when to do so.

Today at the clinic one of the interns was demonstrating our school's methods to some visiting physicians. He hypnotized patient J., whom we put into a trance several times a week, and instructed her to take an umbrella from the corner and open it a quarter of an hour after waking. She was awakened; she remembered nothing, chatted with the nurse, and at the appointed minute stood up, took someone else's umbrella, and opened it in the middle of the ward. When asked why, she replied without hesitation that sunlight was dazzling her through the window, though it was January and we had not seen the sun since Christmas. The visitors laughed. She understood that they were laughing at her and blushed, and I felt so embarrassed that I left.

That evening I reread Chapter Six. The author allows that an action may have reasons, and that these may be stated truthfully, but according to him the action itself chooses them: another person's distress moves one man and leaves another cold, and therefore cannot decide the action for either of them. J. gave her reason truthfully today, insofar as she knew it herself, and was certain that she had chosen it; the intern had chosen it for her a quarter of an hour earlier. If a reason can be put into a person from outside so that she accepts it as her own and even invents an explanation to go with it, then the wine merchant's certainty that his act chooses its own reason proves nothing: anyone given a posthypnotic suggestion is equally certain of the same thing. To my mind, a single umbrella is enough to bring Chapter Six tumbling down. I shall ask the intern for the record of the experiment so that I can describe it more fully.

### *Paris, September 1889*

The Exhibition closes in a month's time, and all summer Paris has been so full of foreigners that one could find neither a seat in an omnibus nor a chair at the Tuesday lectures. I give Monsieur Eiffel's tower a wide berth; the local men of letters signed a protest against it, and I am on their side at heart, though I have said nothing aloud. In August, at the congress of psychology, I heard Janet speak. He had just published his book on psychological automatism, and I bought it that same day.

With that book in hand I reread Chapter Five. According to the author, after blackness, Nobody walks through the desert: the former man is dead, the new one has yet to be born, and everything the former remembered remains with him but no longer gives him orders. Janet describes the same thing among his patients in Le Havre: consciousness breaks into parts, one part acts on its own, and a patient whose hand is writing coherent sentences beneath the table does not know that she is writing. Ribot calls personality an agreement among its parts; when that agreement breaks down, what remains in place of

the person is an assembly of functioning mechanisms without a master. The author described this dissolution with the knowledge that belongs only to a patient who has suffered it himself.

He tells of Odysseus, who called himself Nobody to the Cyclops and, once he had sailed away, could not restrain himself from shouting his name, his father's name, and the name of his island from his ship. The author sees weakness in this. To me it looks like the first sign of recovery.

### *Paris, November 1889*

My cough returned with the first fogs. When my landlady learned of it, she began bringing me hot milk with baking soda and honey at night, and I drink it as I did in childhood when my mother treated me with the same thing, though as a physician I would not give a red cent for it.

The author devotes Chapter Seven to the Name, which he writes with a capital letter and about which, by his own account, one ought to keep silent; he keeps silent about it for a whole chapter. The image comes from the alchemists: the serpent biting its own tail. According to the author, the serpent must go on biting without interruption, and the moment it opens its jaws it will be nothing more than an ordinary snake upon the sand. So it is with the Name: nothing outside it fastens it together, and it holds itself together only by closing upon itself anew at every moment. Translate this into Ribot's language and one obtains his theory of personality: it is held together by continuous activity, which binds body, memory, and habits into one whole, and as soon as that activity slackens, the condition Janet sees in his patients at Le Havre begins. I record the wine merchant's Name as self-consciousness, a person's conception of himself.

He devotes most space to secret names. Rome supposedly had a name that no one dared pronounce, and a tribune who let it slip was executed. Isis sent a serpent to the aged Ra and refused to heal him

until, writhing with the poison, he revealed his secret name to her. Tylor collected a multitude of such beliefs among savages: to them a name is part of a person, like his hair or nails, and whoever knows it has power over him. The author adds his own turn to this belief: a name spoken aloud immediately settles and becomes a sign by which one may be summoned, and therefore the true one cannot be told to anyone, not even to oneself. At the clinic I would say that a conception of oneself, once put into words, becomes a formula and lives apart from the person who formed it. In our ward there is an old woman who, whenever she is asked who she is, gives the same answer: *Je suis la fille à Gervais, le boulanger de la rue Mouffetard*—Gervais the baker's daughter, from Rue Mouffetard. She is past seventy, her father died in the reign of Louis-Philippe, the bakery has long since disappeared, and the phrase she learned as a child has long since ceased to say anything about her.

### *Paris, January 1890*

Half the clinic is down with influenza, which the Parisians call Russian, and for the third week I have been greeted with the question of whether I brought it here. I answer with a joke and a cough, which does not help the joke.

In his *Instruction on the Secret Arts*, the author describes a night beside the Rhine that he considers the chief event of his life. He was drawn from his body as a stone is taken from a plum and laid where there was neither above nor below nor time; everything that had come before seemed to him an empty shell; something evil and faceless moved through the emptiness, knowing that he was not; then darkness came, living and dense, stood beside him as one stands at a patient's bedside, entered him, and he knew her. In the morning he awoke by the water, and she was sitting beside him.

Anyone who has witnessed one of Charcot's major attacks recognizes the description from the first lines. Loss of self and time, terror, a vision of an evil being, followed by the passionate attitudes

and hallucinations of the final period, after which the patient lies exhausted and cannot remember how he came to be on the floor. The professor demonstrated long ago that hysteria occurs in men as well, among laborers and drinkers, and the Mainz wine merchant fits his description better than many. In *Les Démoniaques dans l'art*, Charcot and Richer assembled old paintings of the possessed and showed that the saints had been driving demons out of hysterical women; I expect they would have been delighted to include the author's burned sheets in a second edition. I liked the comparison to a patient's bedside: I am usually the one standing there.

There remains the woman I promised myself I would write about back in October. In the seventh "Figure" she comes at night to the man asleep on the bank near Bacharach, from the direction of the river, though he heard no boat; she stays with him until dawn, listens to his stories, and leaves after taking the key to his house from around his neck. At a Paris police station they would put such a story under a different heading. I regret only one thing: the key was the last thing he had left from his father.

After writing this I read the "Figure" once more. The woman troubles me, and I cannot say why. In the ninth "Figure" the author writes that she came to him at night sometimes as a young woman, sometimes as an old one, and by morning he could not remember which she had been that night. I lay awake for a long time, thinking for some reason of the old woman from whom I bought the bundle on the quay. On Sunday I passed the same stall; the proprietor was sitting there, and I did not question him.

### *Paris, February 1890*

During Butter Week, acquaintances from the embassy invited me for pancakes, and I ate so many that afterward I could not look at sour cream for a week. When my landlady learned that in our country people eat without restraint for a week before Lent and then fast for seven weeks, she said it was very like the Russians.

I have been sleeping worse since January. I fall asleep after midnight, wake at three, and lie there until dawn listening to my landlady's clock striking downstairs. My dreams have become impossible to recount: nothing happens, there is no one there, yet in the morning I am left with the feeling that I spent the whole night standing outside a door, behind which people were speaking a language I knew, without my being able to make out a single word. Sometimes I dream of water, without shore or color. Influenza, my cough, and the damp explain all this perfectly well, and at night I take bromide, the very remedy with which, on paper, I treated the wine merchant a year and a half ago.

The author opens Chapter Nine with Dante's inscription over the gates of hell, concerning the hope those who enter must abandon, and reads it in his own fashion: for him hope is the last thing a man carries after everything else has been taken from him. The expectation that an account is being kept somewhere and that his endurance will be rewarded. According to the author, hell lies where no one and nothing holds a man.

For one who stands upon habits, this means destruction: the ground beneath him is washed away and the water carries him off. For one who possesses a Name, it is his homeland. I would endorse the first half without hesitation: in our wards there are people from whom illness has taken everything, and they are carried away in precisely this fashion, little by little and without return. The second half I leave on the author's conscience. I have never seen anyone swim out of those waters, and there is no one to tell us that he found his homeland there.

Chapter Ten concerns the ascent and begins with Isaiah's words about the king of Babylon: I will ascend into heaven; I will be like the Most High. The fathers understood them as referring to Lucifer; the author applies them to anyone who has escaped another's power and finds only the last words dangerous.

At Bicêtre, where they treat men, I have seen three emperors and one God the Father who asked me for tobacco; all suffered from

general paresis, and they spoke of themselves in much the same terms as Isaiah's king. The author is unlike them, which puzzled me. He wants no throne and laughs at those who do; to him a god is one who was born of himself, without teacher or anointing, who is held for as long as he holds himself, and dies when he releases himself. My paralytics, every last one, insisted that they had been appointed. For delusions of grandeur the wine merchant has far too few thrones, and in my textbooks I have found no heading for what he does have.

### *Paris, March 1890*

What the author did not know is apparent on every page. He takes salt from the alchemists and believes them when they say that white crystals obtained from wormwood ash preserve the virtue of the wormwood, though any apothecary's apprentice will tell you that the ash contains nothing but potash. He had no way of knowing about the brain and the nerves, and where we have anatomy he has demons or darkness.

His anecdotes are entertaining, and I have often laughed aloud over them, to my landlady's surprise, but almost all of them, as far as I can judge, were invented to suit the occasion, as preachers devise their parables. The pig that was supposedly tried in Falaise according to every form of law, dressed in a jacket and trousers, and hanged in the square like a murderer belongs to the same category: only someone who had never been inside a courtroom could invent a court that would waste its time on a pig.

Ribot ends *The Diseases of the Will* with the idea that "I will" merely registers a state of affairs and produces nothing: a decision sums up the work of the nerves and is never its cause. The wine merchant built his book upon the opposite. He has an act that begins its own time and chooses its own reason, and everything else rests upon it. To a physician this is the dream of a patient weary of depending upon his own nerves, a comprehensible and impossible dream. I do not believe it, yet in the evenings I read the wine merchant more willingly than

Ribot. I slipped the sheet bearing Ribot's sentence into my manuscript copy as a bookmark.

### *Paris, late March 1890*

Dr. R., with whom I make the morning rounds in one of the wards, heard me coughing and advised me to go south next winter. I laughed: all Paris is coughing after the influenza, and all Paris cannot go south. His advice did, however, remind me of Nice.

I spent two months there in the winter of 1886, attending a lady from Moscow whose son had sent her to have her nerves treated and would not let her go without a physician. We stayed at a boardinghouse on a narrow street behind the opera. The food was poor, but at the *table d'hôte* one met people from all over Europe. Among them was a German, a retired professor, not yet old, with enormous mustaches and almost blind: he brought his book right up to his face, ate little and awkwardly, and no one at the table dared offer him help. By day he walked in the mountains for six or seven hours; in the evenings he suffered from headaches and, according to the landlady, could fall asleep only with chloral. I advised him to give up the chloral. He thanked me with such courtesy that I understood he would do nothing of the kind.

Just before the New Year, having learned that I was Russian, he sat down beside me with a book he had bought a few days before, Dostoevsky's *L'Esprit souterrain* in its French adaptation. He was delighted with it and spoke of Dostoevsky as one speaks of a relative whose existence one had never suspected. I believe I spoiled his pleasure by explaining that the French had stitched two different stories into one volume, *The Landlady* and *Notes from Underground*, and that the former had nothing to do with the underground. He replied that the first sounded to him like music of a kind they did not write in Germany, that the second was the best thing he had ever read about man, and that he cared nothing for the seams. He also said that

he had once taught Greek in Basel and left his chair because of his eyes and his head.

I have forgotten his surname; something short and prickly. I wonder whether he ever gave up the chloral.

### *Paris, June 1890*

Since last autumn a journal called *Questions of Philosophy and Psychology* has been appearing in Moscow, publishing physicians as well as philosophers, and I wrote to the editors offering a translation of an early sixteenth-century Latin treatise with a medical commentary. I devised the title *Diseases of the Will as Described by a Patient in 1516*. There has been no reply so far.

I shall omit the passage about the Basel bookman from the edition. The author cannot explain himself or object, and to put him on public trial at his worst moment seems to me much the same as exhibiting a patient to students without asking his consent. I shall sign with my initials, as is customary in clinical reports.

In Chapter Eleven the author predicts that in a hundred years people will begin to interpret his book and make a Rule out of it. He miscalculated by some three hundred years and failed to guess his interpreter: the book has fallen into the hands of a neurologist, who has no intention of making a Rule from it.

R. has invited me again to let him listen to my lungs. I promised to come as soon as I send off the manuscript.

# PART II

### *Paris, July 1890*

R. examined me in an empty doctors' room, percussed for a long time beneath my right collarbone, and said nothing. I stained the sputum myself, by Ziehl's method, and found the bacilli myself. Koch discovered them, and I caught myself feeling angry with him, as though he had inoculated me with them.

According to the textbooks, I have about five years. R. says that with proper care I may have longer, and orders me to go south this autumn. I promised to think about it, though there is nothing to think about.

This evening I opened the manuscript copy and closed it again without reading.

### *Paris, November 12, 1890*

All Paris is waiting for news from Berlin. Back in August, Koch announced at a congress that he had found a remedy for consumption, without showing anything substantial, and ever since the newspapers have written about him as though he had already raised someone from the dead. Our physicians laugh a little and wait along with everyone else. I am waiting too, though I give no sign of it.

Last night, as I was falling asleep, I felt a shove in the back, such as one gives a passenger who has dozed off in a railway carriage, and a woman's voice said in Russian, without the least solemnity: take nothing from German hands. I sat up in bed. There was nobody in the room, and the door was locked. Maury called such visions hypnagogic and observed dozens of them in himself: they come at the boundary of sleep and mostly talk nonsense. These words, however, were not nonsense. My old nanny used to say them. She disliked Germans and considered every apothecary a German. It was not her voice.

### *Paris, November 16, 1890*

On Thursday Koch published a detailed article about his remedy in Berlin, and by Saturday the newspapers here had already put it on their front pages. Two of our interns left for Berlin on yesterday's train. My Russian acquaintances ask whether I am going and offer me money in case I have not enough. I am not going. I explain this to myself by saying that I never trusted Koch, and that is true: as early as August I was skeptical of a remedy whose composition its inventor keeps secret, and the attitude of our school toward discoveries from Berlin is well known.

I reread my entry about the dream and noticed the date: the twelfth, a day before the Berlin article. I did not know the particulars then. Nobody did.

*Added in the spring of 1891.* Virchow has shown at autopsies that after the injections the tubercles spread throughout the body. Patients, they say, came to Berlin from all over Europe and went home in worse condition than when they arrived.

### *Paris, December 1890*

I am writing a week later, now that I have been allowed to sit up.

On the night of the third I awoke with a warm sensation in my mouth and did not immediately understand that it was blood. At first there was only a heaviness, like that of a high fever, when one's body becomes strange and enormous and cannot be turned onto its other side. Then the bed seemed to give way beneath me, and I began to fall, slowly, like a stone sinking to the bottom of a pond, and went on falling for a long time. Where, I cannot describe. If I were to compare it with anything, it would be with Bosch's paintings, which I know from engravings, and even that would be a very imperfect comparison: in his paintings, as there, everything is occupied with its own business, and none of that business has anything to do with the person looking on. I had never seen the colors I saw there, and I cannot

name them. However far I fell, nothing came any closer. And everywhere there was meaning, dense as the air before a thunderstorm, except that the meaning was not mine and had no concern for me. I tried to remember something, anything, so that I could write it down afterward, as I write down what I observe in patients, but I retained nothing that could be put into words. In the morning my landlady found me on the floor.

Since that night something dark and sweet has taken up residence in my heart. Presence would be the best word for it, if the word were not already taken: as a child I was taught that God is present in the sanctuary in just this way. This presence is different, and from the first morning I knew that it was forbidden, though there is no one left to forbid me anything. It does not hurt and asks for nothing. It is simply there, and I catch myself being glad of it.

Something similar happened to me once before, though from the opposite direction. At eighteen I joined a procession of the Cross from Kursk to Korennaya Hermitage and walked nearly thirty versts in the heat. In the evening, as I stood by the spring, a light kindled within me. It gave me three things all at once: meaning, purpose, and love for everyone I saw, even the drunken peasant who kept jostling me at the gate. For a month I went about with that light and could not understand why other people did not see what I saw when it was so evident. Then the light went out, and all that remained was the need to do good. A year later, already a student, I read in the Discourses of Symeon the New Theologian, which Bishop Theophan had only recently translated, about a young man named George: one night, while he was praying, a light appeared to him and filled the room, and he could no longer tell whether he was on earth or somewhere else. Symeon calls it the light the apostles saw on Mount Tabor. I recognized my own evening by the spring and envied George: the light returned to him afterward, but never to me. I wanted to enter a monastery, changed my mind, and went to medical school, reasoning that one could heal people without wearing a cassock. In all these years

God has never once shown me where to go next, and my faith departed so quietly that I did not notice in which year it happened.

That light lasted a month. I shall see how long this lasts.

R. insists that I leave for the south at once, and this time I do not argue.

### *Menton, January 1891*

Here there is sunshine, there are lemons, and there are consumptives. People like me sit in chairs along the promenade, wrapped in blankets, and bow to one another like members of a private club to which admission is granted on the strength of a single recommendation issued by Koch.

Yesterday, to occupy the evening, I reread the account of the night by the Rhine that I explained a year ago according to Charcot. It is unlike my night. The author experienced emptiness and something evil; I experienced falling and a meaning that was not mine. If my night is to be explained according to Charcot, it belongs in a different chapter. Only the ending is alike. Darkness entered the author and remained, and in the morning sat beside him by the water; something remained in me too, and I know that it is here even now, as I write. I would not have dwelt on a resemblance at a single point if it had not made me examine the others.

There are not many. The shove in the back and the voice in November, which I recorded above. And a dream that I did not record, though I began this notebook for the express purpose of recording everything. On the night before I bought the bundle, I dreamed of Quai Voltaire in a fog and heard someone behind me say the word *Mayence*, so that I could not see who had spoken. In the morning I laughed at the dream and went to the booksellers as I did every Sunday. When I wrote about the discovery, I omitted the dream: it would hardly do for a physician setting out to analyze the wine merchant's delusions to begin with his own.

I have an explanation, and a fairly good one. I now recall that about two weeks before the purchase, while I was rummaging through his books, the owner of that same stall complained that someone had saddled him with a packet of Roman papers that nobody wanted, and he may have mentioned the city then. I paid no attention, but memory, as I have learned, preserves more than we entrust to it. Only one thing remains unclear. Before leaving Paris, I did finally ask him about the old woman who had been sitting at his stall that Sunday. He replied that he did not allow even his wife to attend to his stall, knew no old woman, and had sold no bundles.

### *Menton, February 1891*

If the old woman, the dream, and the voice have the same origin, the bundle did not come into my possession by chance, and then one must ask where this absence of chance begins. I tried to trace it and found myself going one step farther back each time: from the quay to Paris, where I came to study under Charcot; from Paris to the medical faculty; from the faculty to the monastery I had considered entering; and so back to that evening at Korennaya. It follows that the darkness which took up residence in me in December may have been appointed for me long before, while for twenty years I followed a well-worn track toward it and mistook every turn for a choice of my own.

The author of Ostia laughs at such reasoning. In Chapter Six, when a count's son enters a monastery, the court astrologer takes out the horoscope drawn up at his birth and discovers the passage in which it was all foretold, though he had read it differently before. I am doing the same thing with my life: taking what has happened and rereading the past so that everything leads to it. At the clinic, such retrospective deception of memory is no less common than among astrologers.

It is a good explanation, except that it does not answer the question. If the track was already laid, then neither my refusal to go to Berlin, nor my choice of medicine nor this very notebook belongs to me, and Ribot is more right than he himself supposed: "I will" produces

nothing; it is itself produced by someone who does not appear in The Diseases of the Will.

Today I deliberately went walking in the mountains, where I had not intended to go, and spent the whole walk wondering whether I had been led there for that very purpose.

### *Menton, March 1891*

The local physician, Dr. B., learning that I came from Charcot's school, invited me to observe an interesting case: a washerwoman from the old town who, since her husband's death, has begun falling into a somnambulistic state and telling stories while in it. He hypnotizes her on Thursdays, before witnesses, and seems prouder of her than of the rest of his practice combined.

The washerwoman is about fifty, cannot read or write, and speaks the local dialect, which B. translated into French for me. He hypnotized her quickly, using Braid's method, with a polished button. At first she spoke of her husband, then of the laundry, and then began to tell, in the first person, how she had fashioned a serpent out of clay and the old god's own spittle and placed it in his path; how the serpent had bitten him and he had cried out, and how she refused to heal him until he told her the name he concealed from everyone. B. translated without understanding what she was speaking about and asked me whether it came from a saint's life. I recognized Isis and Ra.

An explanation was found that very evening, and B. found it before I did: some ten years earlier the washerwoman had worked in Nice for an Englishman who collected Egyptian antiquities, and presumably heard her master recount his papyri to guests at table. Servants hear more at table than we suppose, and somnambulists repeat what they have heard with a precision they lack when awake. I record this explanation and agree with almost all of it.

When she had finished her story, she added that no one had yet decided whether she had taken the god's name from him or whether

he had given it in payment of his own accord. I have never encountered that question in any version of the myth I have read. It appears in Ostia, in Chapter Seven, in almost the same words.

### *Menton, May 1891*

All the Russians here and half the English are reading Huysmans's Down There, just published as a separate volume. The ladies hide it beneath their blankets whenever a priest walks past. It is a novel about the Parisian Satanists and Gilles de Rais, written with such knowledge of the subject that one cannot help wondering where the author acquired it. In Lyon, they say, from the former abbé Boullan, whom he portrayed as Dr. Johannes: a man who treats the possessed, wards off curses laid by others, and wages war against the Parisian Rosicrucians, who supposedly send death to him by mail.

A lady from Lyon, who is undergoing treatment here for the same complaint as mine, learned that I belonged to Charcot's school and brought me an invitation from Boullan. He would be delighted to show a physician from the Salpêtrière his patients and his cures, and I need not concern myself with travel or board. I had no reason to refuse. For a neurologist it would be a rare opportunity: hysterical women treated by prayer and ritual, and a healer who, to all appearances, suffers from the very disorder he treats. I thanked her, said I would consider it, and that evening wrote that I would not come. Why, I cannot explain to myself. My health is better this spring than it was in the autumn, and Lyon is less than a day's journey away.

The lady took offense and stopped acknowledging me on the promenade.

### *Paris, August 1891*

I returned to Paris for the summer. My landlady greeted me as though I had risen from the dead and, in her delight, raised the price of coal once again, though there would be no need for a fire before October.

The washerwoman's question had troubled me all spring, and during my first week back I went to the Bibliothèque Nationale to discover where the myth had come from. I found it quickly. It was written in hieratic script on a papyrus belonging to the Turin Museum. Pleyte and Rossi published the papyrus in the seventies, and Lefébure's French translation appeared in a German Egyptological journal in 1883. Such texts have been readable only since Champollion, which is to say, in our own century. I checked Plutarch, who wrote an entire book about Isis: there one finds Osiris shut in a chest and his dismembered body, but no serpent made of spittle and no secret name. Nor do they appear in Horapollo, whom the humanists read as a key to Egyptian signs. In 1516 nobody in Europe knew this story.

That evening I examined Chapter Seven until my eyes ached. The passage cannot be an insertion: the hand, the ink, and the paper are the same as on the neighboring leaves, and the lines about Isis occur in the middle of a page, in the same continuous text as everything around them. There remains only one reasonable explanation: the entire manuscript copy is a forgery, made recently by someone who had read Lefébure. Old paper is not difficult to obtain, a handwriting can be learned with sufficient patience, and Paris has plenty of people who make their living by such means.

I accept this explanation, though two circumstances stand in its way. Forgers work in order to sell their wares at a high price, whereas my manuscript lay among a bundle of Italian receipts which nobody wanted and was sold for three francs. And a man sufficiently well read to insert the Turin myth would hardly have left in his text an error that the first specialist could detect.

R., to whom I told the story over dinner, advised me to take the manuscript to the École des Chartes. I promised to do so and did not.

### *Paris, October 1891*

In a week I shall be going south again. For the present I am reading the newspapers, and I believe I have laughed more in the past three days than in the whole of this summer.

Madame Blavatsky died in London in May, and it is now reported that her ashes, after cremation according to the Indian custom, were divided into three portions: one was taken to Madras, another to New York, and the third remained in London. Catholics required centuries to distribute their relics among the chapels; the Theosophists managed it in a single summer. The deceased would have been pleased. Even in life she could never remain in one place.

The Petit Journal describes a séance at a medium's house in Batignolles, where a widow was shown her dead daughter, luminous and dressed in white. One of the guests, a retired gendarme, seized the apparition by the hand, which proved to belong to the medium's cook. The gendarme made a statement to the police commissioner, and the cook insists that she was walking in her sleep. The last detail touched me, I confess: the cook, it seems, had heard of Charcot too.

Acquaintances send me Rebus from St. Petersburg, and I read it as others read comic papers. In Tver, a deceased general supposedly appeared at a table and dictated his memoirs, and the table rapped out so many spelling mistakes that the editors thought it necessary to explain that spirits are under no obligation to observe the rules of orthography. Judging by the style, the general received a poor education.

What took up residence in me in December has not gone away. I know the explanation for it. I have written it above and see no reason to write it again.

### *Menton, December 1892*

This notebook has lain in my trunk for more than a year. After the affair with Lefébure, I could not open it without remembering that I

had promised R. to take the manuscript to the École des Chartes and had failed to do so. It was easier not to open it.

Moscow never replied to my proposal, but I subscribed to the journal and receive it here a month late. The latest issue contains a long article by Preobrazhensky on the German philosopher Nietzsche, who, judging by the tone, is already a subject of debate in Moscow. Formerly a professor of Greek philology at Basel, nearly blind, he gave up his chair because of illness, spent his winters in Nice, and went mad in Turin in January 1889.

I put down the journal and sat for a long time without moving. They write of general paresis. Chloral had nothing to do with it, and yet chloral was the first thing that came to mind.

Within a week I had ordered from Nice as many of his books as the bookseller there could find, and I am reading them in German. I agree with almost all his criticism, and this frightens me rather more than it surprises me. What struck me most was the ascetic priest in On the Genealogy of Morality, a healer who relieves suffering by giving it meaning, thereby making the patient even sicker. It is said directly to men of my profession. And the madman in The Gay Science, who searches for God with a lantern in broad daylight and announces that we have killed him. My faith departed without any help from Nietzsche, quietly, in a year I cannot name, and he has given me the words I lacked at the time. Had I been a little more attentive in Nice, I might have told him so.

The oranges on the trees outside the boardinghouse have turned yellow just in time for Christmas, and the English ladies are photographing them as though nobody at home would believe in an orange without its tree.

### *Menton, late December 1892*

At first Nietzsche's overman seemed to me an old acquaintance from Chapter Ten of Ostia. There too a man escapes another's law and

establishes his own values, without asking either God or his neighbor, and the pious call that pride as well. Zarathustra teaches that man is something to be overcome, and the wine merchant, I suspect, would have agreed.

The differences emerge as one reads further. Nietzsche makes the overman a goal toward which humanity must advance, like a shore in the distance, and Zarathustra descends from the mountains expressly to preach it. The wine merchant laughs at such a goal: a man who promises to turn his disciple into a god places a finished image before him and tells him to worship it until he resembles it, whereas ascent, according to the author, has no place where one may arrive and sit down.

Nietzsche seeks listeners and longs for them. The author of Ostia despises teachers and writes Rules which he himself commands us to burn. Books are written to be read, and Nietzsche cries ever louder so that someone will finally hear him. The wine merchant wrote so that he would not be understood, and succeeded: the Cologne masters understood nothing in him except heresy, while for three years I understood nothing except illness.

The eternal recurrence, which Nietzsche proposes as the greatest test, would have aroused the wine merchant's suspicions: for him repetition is the first sign that what has been done has settled into salt.

Nietzsche buried God thoroughly. Of the one who stood opposed to God he said almost nothing, as though that one had died at the same time. The darkness that took up residence in me the December before last had apparently not read Nietzsche.

### *Menton, January 1893*

I go out less and less. The resort society gathers on the promenade toward noon, when the sun is at its highest and the physicians order everyone to catch as much of it as possible, whereas I spend that hour reading in my room and go out when the promenade begins to empty.

There is scarcely anyone left for me to exchange greetings with: the lady from Lyon has never forgiven me for Lyon, the rest of my acquaintances change every winter, and by the second winter I had already stopped trying to remember their faces.

I now prefer the night to the day. My cough prevents me from sleeping before three in the morning in any case, and I have long since stopped arguing with it: I light the lamp and read, and those hours are the best of my day. Rain, which everyone here regards as a punishment, comes as a relief to me: when it rains nobody invites me for a walk or asks why I am so pale. I have a medical excuse for this, too, and make use of it. B. himself ordered me to stay indoors in damp weather. He also ordered me to seek the sun, admittedly, but I forget that part.

### *Menton, January 14, 1893*

They write from Paris that Boullan died suddenly in Lyon on the fourth, having supposedly felt a blow to the chest the day before, a blow he had long been predicting. Jules Bois, writing in Gil Blas, openly accuses Guaita and his Rosicrucians of killing the old man by sorcery. Huysmans confirms that Boullan had repelled their curses for many years and failed to repel this last one, and there is talk, apparently, of duels.

I record an explanation of which I have no doubt. Boullan was approaching seventy, his heart was said to be weak, and for years he had lived in expectation of a fatal blow from Paris. A man who spends years expecting to be murdered at a distance may die from the expectation alone, without any curse being necessary. Suggestion can raise blisters on a patient's skin as though from a burn, and the heart is no less susceptible to it than the skin.

### *Menton, May 1893*

The duels reported in January have taken place, and the Paris newspapers describe them so entertainingly that I read the accounts aloud to my landlady, cough or no cough. Jules Bois fought a pistol duel with Guaita. On the way to the dueling ground, Bois's horse went wild for no apparent reason, and he arrived late, convinced that the sorcery had already begun. Both men missed, and afterward it was discovered that the bullet had failed to leave one of the pistols. They never established whose pistol it was. A few days ago Bois fought Papus with sabers, and on the way to that duel his carriage broke down twice. Both received slight wounds and, they say, parted almost as friends. A horse sensing its rider's fear, damp gunpowder, and a Parisian carriage require neither Guaita nor the late Boullan to account for them, and both sides, I believe, understand this perfectly well. They simply cannot admit it: then there would have been no reason to fight.

Even funnier are the installments of Dr. Bataille's The Devil in the Nineteenth Century, which the ladies here buy as eagerly as a serialized novel. The author claims to have infiltrated secret lodges and witnessed everything with his own eyes. In one installment the devil appears to the Freemasons in the form of a crocodile, seats himself at a piano, and plays something spirited for them. My landlady asked me whether it was true. I replied that if the devil took it into his head to play the piano, he would hardly choose a form in which reaching an octave was so inconvenient.

### *Badenweiler, June 1893*

B. has sent me to the Black Forest for the summer, to Badenweiler, where German physicians treat patients with chest complaints by means of air and quiet. A town consisting of a single street, Roman baths, a Kursaal, and a park on the hillside. Here they call me *der russische Doktor*, and there seems to be no other Russian doctor in the

town. From German hands I now accept air, milk, and sleep, and so far none of them has done me any harm.

From the mountain above the town one can see the Rhine valley. The station at Müllheim is half an hour away by carriage, and from there Basel is about an hour. The Rhine is broad and gray from here. After the rains its waters run high.

# PART III

### *Badenweiler, August 1893*

Charcot died on the sixteenth. He had gone to the Morvan with two of his pupils for a rest and died during the night at an inn near Lake Settons of a heart condition, almost instantly, according to the reports. I learned of it from the Frankfurter Zeitung in the Kursaal, with music playing, and the Germans at the next table, seeing me put down the newspaper, politely asked whether there was bad news from Russia.

Everything I know as a physician I learned at his clinic, and everything I have written in this notebook about the wine merchant has been written through his eyes. He was harsh and would tolerate no objections, yet his school was so firmly established under him that I cannot remember a day when any of us doubted that we were seeing what he told us to see.

Chapter Eleven says that while a founder is alive his disciples have to do with his will, but when he departs they are left with what has settled from him, and it is a Rule they now serve. R. writes from Paris that less than two weeks have passed and the disciples are already dividing the inheritance. No one has yet been appointed to the chair, but in the doctors' room they are arguing over which of them is most faithful to the master, and each proves his fidelity by beating the others with quotations from the master's own words. One intern, according to R., declared before everyone that the patients had performed the great attack in four stages for the professor because they knew what he expected, and that Bernheim in Nancy had been saying so for years. They nearly expelled him. Under Charcot they certainly would have.

If the intern is right, then I too explained the night by the Rhine according to a description which the patients had learned by watching us. I shall not think about that today.

### *Menton, December 1893*

I am spending the winter here again. My landlady has aged over the summer and crossed herself when she saw me at the door, something she had never done before.

On the sixth, in Paris, a former patient shot Gilles de la Tourette, Charcot's pupil, in his own apartment. He was wounded in the head but survived. The woman insists that he had hypnotized her from a distance, deprived her of her will, money, and health, and that she shot him in order to free herself. Under Charcot her case would have been discussed at a Tuesday lecture.

I examined it in just that fashion, according to Ribot and Janet, and arrived at the conclusion any of us would have reached: a delusion of influence in a hysterical woman who had read too many newspaper accounts of hypnosis. And yet the wine merchant described her better than anyone. In Chapter Four he writes of a man whose own habits have departed, leaving an empty place into which another's will enters and holds him so completely that his actions can be predicted from the person he serves. The author calls this bondage. The patient called it hypnosis, Boullan called it a curse, and she herself, judging by the shot, was seeking a way out of that bondage.

I sent Gilles de la Tourette a letter wishing him a speedy recovery. He does not remember me, of course.

### *Menton, March 1894*

The carnival in Nice has ended, and my landlady's niece brought back a whole lapful of confetti, which we spent another week sweeping out of the corridor. The savages described by Jules Bois, the same man who fought a duel with Guaita last spring, live in Passy and pay their rent regularly. In The Little Religions of Paris he visited every shrine in the capital, from the Buddhists to the worshippers of Lucifer, and describes them with the seriousness of a traveler describing the customs of natives. His Luciferians are almost respectable people: they

revere Lucifer as a god of light wronged by Adonai and refuse to have anything to do with the Satanists who steal communion wafers and celebrate Mass backward.

We have an eyewitness of our own at the boardinghouse. A retired captain who is spending his third winter here claims that he once attended a black Mass in Paris out of curiosity. It was celebrated by a defrocked priest, according to all the rules, only backward. The man remembered his Latin so poorly that the congregation had to prompt him from their prayer books, and the communion wafer, as it later emerged, had been bought for a franc from the sacristan of a neighboring church. The captain tells this as the most dreadful thing he has ever witnessed and does not notice that he is telling a joke.

The wine merchant described these people in Chapter Four as though he had been sitting beside the captain. Take the church away from one of our priests and an antimension is enough for him: spread it on a portable table and he can celebrate the liturgy even on a drum, as regimental priests do. But those who celebrate it backward cannot manage without an altar, or a communion wafer, or a sacristan willing to sell them one.

### *Basel, June 1894*

I finally fulfilled the promise I made to R. three years ago, though not in Paris. Basel is a little over an hour from Badenweiler, and the elderly librarian of the university library here, Dr. F., who has spent forty years studying Upper Rhine manuscripts, agreed to examine my copy.

He examined it for two days. The paper, he said, came from a mill in this region, and the bull's head with a star was familiar to him from municipal documents of the 1510s. The handwriting belonged to a clerk from a Lower Rhine chancery, an experienced man who wrote rapidly and without corrections. The ink and the browning along the edges of the leaves could not be forged in our time. He had seen one forgery of this kind in forty years, and the paper had betrayed it. Then

he asked what the treatise was about. I told him it was about repentance.

That evening, at my hotel beside the Rhine, I reread Chapter Two. Where the author speaks of the voice from darkness, he suddenly begins to say "we": *Nos, qui illinc loquimur, nomen tuum nec novimus nec quaerimus* — "We who speak from there do not know your name, nor do we ask." Formerly I had read this as a rhetorical figure. In Figure Eight, where he writes about forbidden books, there is a line I had also passed over: what was absent from those books, *she* supplied for him. Forgery is no longer an explanation. A man living in 1516 could not have known the Turin papyrus. I have nothing more than what is written in the text.

The hotel windows overlook the Rhine. I sat at the window until dawn, and all night the water flowed toward Mainz.

### *Basel, July 1894*

I came to Basel again, this time without the manuscript, and went to the museum to see Holbein's The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb, of which Dostoevsky's prince says that it might cause a man to lose his faith. The panel is long and low, no higher than a coffin, and one looks into it as into the recess of a crypt. The body is painted as a good pathologist would paint it: the third day, at least; hands and feet darkened, mouth slightly open, one eye not quite closed.

They say Holbein painted it from a drowned man taken out of the Rhine, and I believe it: we used to receive bodies like that from the Seine. I had nothing to lose, and I looked at him as I would at a specimen, but after a quarter of an hour I found myself waiting for him to open his eye the rest of the way, something I had never expected of a corpse in all my years of practice. The attendant had to remind me twice that the museum was closing.

*Publisher's note*. Four leaves were torn from the notebook between the entries for July 1894 and May 1895; their stubs remain.

***Badenweiler, May 1895***

I went to Müllheim to collect money from Moscow at the post office. Once again it had arrived a week later than promised. At the market near the station they are selling the first asparagus, white and thick as candles, and the market women shout out the prices as though they were selling something forbidden. The cherry trees on the slopes have already finished flowering, and the vines are covered with small green leaves. While waiting for the carriage back, I went into a bookseller's shop and bought a new book by the Berlin theologian Gunkel on creation and chaos. Behind the opening verses of Genesis he finds the Babylonian account of how Marduk split the sea monster Tiamat and made heaven and earth from her body. I read that account as a student in George Smith, where the heaven above had not yet been raised. In the new German translation quoted by Gunkel, the heaven above had not yet been named, and the earth below had no name. I prefer this translation.

*Same place, at night*

For the Babylonians Tiamat is the salt waters, the sea that existed before any name and from which everything emerged.[79] Having defeated her, Marduk assigns names and destinies to the gods and receives fifty names himself in return. The Babylonians, I think, understood better than many who sets the seal and what it costs him. Nicholas of Cusa called God *possest*, the power-to-be, the one in whom everything possible already exists before becoming any one thing. He was born in Kues on the Moselle, in the wine country from which our wine merchant presumably brought his wares. Put these things together, and Tiamat becomes a sea of possibility in which everything is dissolved and nothing has been named, while the wine merchant's salt is what has precipitated from that sea and hardened.

[79] The Beast in Revelation comes out of the sea, and in the new world "there was no more sea." What's left is a river flowing from the throne. Water with a source and a bed. The sea crystallized. It was never defeated.

And the water in Chapter Nine, which undermines the crust and carries away those standing upon it, is the same water, only returning.

*Later*

Nicholas of Cusa placed everything possible in God. But if Tiamat is a sea of possibility, why should the gods themselves not be possible within it? One god need not be created by another: one might arise who would require no other hand to continue existing. The wine merchant calls this self-holding. It follows that there may be many gods, all born from what had previously been none of them. Why, then, is one of them called the Creator of everything else?

*The following morning*

There is no Tiamat in the wine merchant's text, and I have never seen his nine sheets and never shall. In Figure Nine the woman looks silently toward the place where the road runs down over the edge of the earth into darkness so deep that one cannot see one's own hand. If I had the ninth sheet, I would look for water in it.

## *Menton, November 1895*

The first winter storms have arrived. The sea is gray, the spray makes the promenade impassable, and the visitors sit in their rooms, as I always do. I am rereading The Brothers Karamazov for the first time since my student days, and I linger longest over Ivan's devil. He is a shabby gentleman with a cold, a dependent who dreams of being incarnated as a merchant's wife weighing seven poods and lighting candles before God. Ivan spends the whole night shouting that he is nothing more than a hallucination, and the devil readily agrees, driving him into a fury. As a student I read this chapter as an excellent description of fever. Now I examine it as a physician who has spent five years unable to decide what has taken up residence in his heart, and I see that Dostoevsky did not decide either. The devil tells Ivan an anecdote about a philosopher who traveled a quadrillion versts, and

Ivan remembers that he had invented the anecdote himself at school and forgotten it.

Dostoevsky gave his devil the same escape route that I use for my coincidences: everything the visitor says was already known to the host. Plato argued that all knowledge is recollection and, by way of demonstration, summoned a slave boy who, without having been taught, worked out how to double a square. If Plato is right, the escape route available to Ivan and me is wider than we imagined: whatever the visitor says, the host once knew it, and no experiment can establish whether it came from outside, because any answer can be attributed to memory. Under such an arrangement the devil has no means of proving his existence, and Ivan has no means of disproving it. Only my visitor says nothing, tells no anecdotes, and gives me nothing by which to catch him.

### *Menton, December 1895*

The captain saw The Brothers Karamazov on my table and asked what it was about. I told him that in one chapter Christ returns to Seville during the Inquisition, the Grand Inquisitor puts him in prison, and comes to explain why during the night. The captain thought for a moment and replied that the Inquisitor appeared to have been a practical man.

The captain is more right than he knows. The Inquisitor holds people by bread, miracle, and authority, knowing that freedom is beyond their strength; he locks Christ away so that he will not interfere. The wine merchant writes without malice of the one who sets the seal: he holds firmly, and thanks to him many remain themselves to the end, even when everything else within them has fallen apart. Neither man says that the holder lies. On my table lies a manuscript copy made for inquisitors, so that they might know what they were dealing with. Someone in Cologne, then, read the wine merchant as the old man in Seville examined his prisoner at night, at

length and with a thorough knowledge of the matter, and unlike the old man, did not let him go.

### *Menton, January 1896*

In Bobok, the deceased philosopher Platon Nikolayevich explains to his neighbors in the cemetery that consciousness in the dead holds on for another two or three months, sometimes six, through inertia, until it decays into a single meaningless little word. Inertia is a good word; the author of the tractate would have said "salt." It would be interesting to gather everyone who has decayed to a single word and write down what remains of them. Dahl's dictionary contains some two hundred thousand words, and there must have been far more dead people than that in a thousand years, so there would not be enough words to go around, and most would have to share a single word among thousands. I suspect the resulting dictionary would be thinner than any peasant's vocabulary: "mama," "vodka," "Lord," someone's name, and for the man who has lived his whole life without ever saying anything, "bobok." The old woman in our ward would have "Our Father."

This is the first thing I have written about the dead without writing as a physician.

### *Badenweiler, July 1896*

Six years ago, in July, R. examined me by percussion in an empty doctors' room. The time allotted to me by our textbooks ran out last summer, and I failed to notice.

I shall record my condition for the sake of order, as I would that of any patient. My weight is steady; by summer I had even gained two pounds. In the evenings my temperature rises to thirty-eight degrees, then falls by morning. I cough in the mornings; there has been no blood since the winter before last. The local physician, after listening to my chest, says that everything remains unchanged at the right apex:

the cavity is not growing and is firmly walled off, like an old scar. With this fibrous form of the disease, people can live fifteen years or more. He tells every new patient this by way of consolation, but tells me with mild displeasure, as though I were spoiling his annual report.

I have no intention of dying just yet. There is still much in this notebook that I do not understand, and that, it seems, is the only thing that interests me.

*July 12.* Reached the castle ruins above the town without stopping once. Last summer I had to stop three times.

*July 14.* A newcomer at the table d'hôte, learning that this was my fourth summer here, asked whether I was the local doctor. I replied that I was the local patient. He decided that this amounted to the same thing.

*July 15.* R. writes from Paris that the Black Forest air is holding me. I do not argue with him.

### *Colmar, September 1896*

Colmar is half a day's journey from Badenweiler, across the Rhine at Breisach and then over the Alsatian plain. The signs here are now in German, the shopkeepers speak Alsatian, and when they heard my French they served me more pleasantly than the German ahead of me. The Isenheim Altarpiece stands in a former Dominican monastery, and I came to see it because of Huysmans, who describes Grünewald's Crucifixion in Kassel with such enthusiasm in Down There. The Crucifixion here is more terrible: Christ's body is covered with small sores, his fingers are contorted, and when I learned that the altarpiece had been painted for the hospital of the Antonites, where they treated St. Anthony's fire, I understood what I was looking at. Patients whose hands and feet blackened and fell away because of ergot in their bread were brought before this altar, and they saw their own sores upon the body of Christ. Perhaps that helped them more than the monks did.

On the panel depicting the Temptation of St. Anthony, demons tear the saint's hair and beat him with clubs, while in the corner sits a man with a swollen belly, festering sores all over his body, and webbed feet. As a physician I see a man suffering from the last stage of St. Anthony's fire; Huysmans would see a demon, and Anthony himself, judging by his face, makes no distinction between them. Those poisoned by ergot see just such creatures in their delirium, and Grünewald, painting for their hospital, might have drawn his demons from their accounts. Thus the demons on the panel and the disease in its corner are the same thing, seen from opposite sides of a sickbed, and this time I stood on both sides.

*Colmar, evening*

At the hotel a thought occurred to me, which I shall write down before it begins to seem foolish. Ergot grows on rye in wet years; wet years are often years of famine, and in a famine people eat whatever bread they can get. Those poisoned by it suffer convulsions, see creatures, believe themselves to be flying through the air, and all this is recorded in the proceedings of witch trials, except that there it is called a witches' sabbath. The wine merchant tells of a girl from a farm in the Eifel whose entire family died in a single winter. She confessed that she had sold herself to the devil and flown to a sabbath where no salt was served. A winter of famine, a dead family, and a feast dreamed of by the hungry: I would give her the same diagnosis as the figure in the corner of the panel. Weyer, physician to the Duke of Cleves, wrote as early as the sixteenth century that witches were for the most part sick and deceived old women, and Bourneville had good reason to republish him in his Bibliothèque diabolique, but Weyer, as far as I remember, gave no thought to bread. The demonologists explained the absence of salt at the sabbath by saying that the devil cannot endure it as a symbol of eternity. The wine merchant would have explained it differently.

### *Menton, April 1897*

On the nineteenth, at the hall of the Geographical Society in Paris, Léo Taxil announced to those assembled that for twelve years he had been making fools of the entire Catholic world. His whole Masonic devil, from the crocodile at the piano to the repentant priestess Diana Vaughan, whose memoirs were read in monasteries and praised in Rome, had been his invention from beginning to end. He had borrowed Diana's name from a typist employed at a typewriter office. The hall, they say, erupted in uproar, and Taxil had to be escorted out under police protection. I laughed at the crocodile four years ago without once asking myself who had invented it.

If Diana Vaughan could be invented so convincingly that bishops believed in her for twelve years, then the one I write about in this notebook could be invented as well. I went to bed with this thought, almost relieved.

*Night of the twenty-first*. I awoke to the sound of laughter. Someone beside me was laughing, softly, like a woman amused by a good joke that had been told to someone else. There was nobody in the room.

*Morning*. Laughter during sleep is more common among nervous people than is generally supposed, and it was probably I myself who laughed at Taxil. Over coffee my landlady asked who the lady was who had been laughing in my room during the night.

### *Menton, January 1898*

I spent the summer and autumn in bed. In June I suffered a hemorrhage worse than the one in December 1890, and until October Dr. Sch. would not allow me to remain out of bed for more than an hour. During those months I wrote nothing except my temperature chart.

Just before Christmas, Guaita died at the age of thirty-six in his castle in Lorraine. Some newspapers blame his kidneys, others morphine, and the followers of the late Boullan naturally see it as a delayed

retaliatory blow from Lyon. Five years ago I could not explain to myself why I had refused Boullan's invitation. Now I have gone over the whole affair again and see that there is nothing to explain: Boullan was old and ill and would have died without me, and I must have refused a dozen invitations during those years. I remember this one only because the man who invited me subsequently died. Nothing remains. I record this coincidence as an empty one and am, I confess, pleased: it means I can still distinguish where a remainder exists and where there is none.

### *Menton, Easter night, 1898*

The Russian church here was consecrated in 1892, and in six winters I had never entered it. Tonight I looked in. There were not many people, mostly visitors to the resort and servants from the Russian villas, and when they began singing "Christ is risen," I answered with the rest and only afterward heard *what* I had answered. My lips know this service better than I do, just as the old woman in our ward knew the "Our Father" when she could no longer remember her daughter's name.

Standing there with my candle, I asked myself whether I wanted the light I had known at eighteen, at Korennaya, to return, and could not answer. If it returned, it would have to share its place with what has lived in me since 1890, and I am not certain they could coexist. I am even less certain that I would choose the light. I exchanged the Easter greeting with everyone I was supposed to, then blew out my candle on the church steps and threw it away. Inside, there was emptiness. I looked at the faces around me and wondered whether all these people had gathered to divide the Kingdom of God among themselves, and what they intended to do there once the division was complete. Paul promises that there I shall know even as I am known, which means that I shall be known through and through, and so will every one of them. But then there will be nothing left worth looking at.

The English poet and priest Herbert wrote: "Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back." I never used to understand why it drew back.

### *Badenweiler, October 1898*

The Kursaal has closed for the winter, the orchestra has gone away, and in the mornings there is frost on the benches in the park. Only we consumptives remain, along with the postman, who now comes in to talk to me.

Mackay, a German poet of anarchist sympathies, has published a biography of Max Stirner in Berlin. Until now I knew only that Stirner had written one book and been forgotten by everyone afterward, so I read both the biography and The Ego and Its Own in succession. The book begins and ends with a line borrowed from Goethe: I have set my cause upon nothing. Everything people serve, from God to humanity, Stirner calls specters and fixed ideas, wheels that turn of their own accord inside the head. I spent years treating people with wheels like these, and for the first time I am reading a philosopher who applies the same word to everything society reveres. The wine merchant has an older word for such things and speaks of them far more calmly. The passage where Stirner calls himself the creative nothing out of which he creates everything as creator could stand in Ostia beside Nobody walking through the desert, except for one thing: Stirner's nothing immediately becomes an owner, and the entire book concerns what he intends to take as his own, whereas the wine merchant's Nobody takes nothing and does not know what he will become. I read the first third without stopping, but then came politics, three varieties of liberals, the state, and property, and I began falling asleep over the pages, which is hardly what one expects of a book with Goethe for its epigraph.

Mackay describes Stirner's life in a way that makes one want to laugh and weep at once. He taught at a girls' boarding school, used his wife's dowry to establish a milk business in Berlin, went bankrupt, was

imprisoned twice for debt, and died after being bitten by some insect, the wound becoming infected. I drink the local milk every morning and think of him.

### *Menton, January 1899*

It has been raining for a week, and I have been ordered not to go out. I took Schopenhauer from my trunk, having left him unopened since my student days. Book Four of The World as Will and Representation ends by saying that to all those still full of will, what remains after its complete denial is nothing, while to those in whom the will has turned and renounced itself, our entire world, with all its suns and Milky Ways, is likewise nothing. As a student I wept over that page.

He derives morality from compassion: the same will suffers in another as in myself, and when I cause him pain I am biting into my own flesh. His later counsels on worldly wisdom offer one piece of advice after another: live in solitude, desire little, expect nothing good from people, and take care of your health. He followed these counsels in his own fashion. In Berlin he deliberately scheduled his lectures for the same hour as Hegel's and found himself without an audience. A seamstress who lived nearby and talked outside his door he pushed down the stairs, and by court order he paid her an allowance for twenty years. When he learned of her death, he wrote: *obit anus, abit onus* — the old woman is dead, the burden is gone. The world will, whose denial he sought, manifested itself in him chiefly through quarrels.

The wine merchant described the same nothing in Chapter Four: a house swept clean, where nothing happens and where a monk comes to the window at noon to see whether anyone is approaching. Schopenhauer sees salvation in this nothing; the wine merchant sees danger, for sooner or later someone will enter an empty house. The author mentions the sages who extinguish themselves like lamps in Chapter Ten, without mockery, and refuses to judge them.

### *Badenweiler, March 1900*

The notebook I had been keeping since last winter disappeared with my traveling bag on the train between Menton and Müllheim. Fortunately, I was carrying the manuscript copy of Ostia in my coat pocket. I remember little of what was in the missing notebook and shall not attempt to reconstruct it.

Spring begins here sooner than one expects. Down in the valley it is already warm, while snow still lies on the Blauen, and in the mornings damp air descends from the mountain. The paths in the park have turned to mud, the Kursaal is empty, and I sit alone in the reading room, apart from an elderly Englishman who reads The Times every morning and falls asleep on the third page every morning. The first crocuses have appeared beside the Roman baths.

Flournoy, the professor of psychology in Geneva, has published a substantial book about a medium whom he calls Mademoiselle Hélène Smith. In her trances she becomes sometimes a fifteenth-century Indian princess, sometimes Marie Antoinette, and sometimes visits Mars and speaks Martian. Flournoy patiently demonstrates, year after year, that the princess came from an old history of India which the girl might have seen in the house of acquaintances, while the Martian language follows French grammar and has Genevan word order. For something a patient once read or heard and forgot, then later presented as a revelation, he has devised a word: cryptomnesia. What I have privately called forgotten memory for ten years has finally received a name.

I sat down and tested everything recorded in this notebook against that word. It accounts entirely for Mayence in my dream, since the bookseller had mentioned the city earlier, and for the words spoken by the voice in 1890, since they were my nanny's words. It goes no further. The owner of the stall knows nothing of the old woman on the quay; the question about the stolen name was asked by a washerwoman who had never read Ostia; and it was my landlady who

asked about the lady laughing in my room during the night. Cryptomnesia explains what takes place inside one head, whereas all my remainders lie in other heads.

### *Badenweiler, June 1900*

At the end of May the American writer Crane, twenty-eight years old, was brought here to die, accompanied by his wife. He lived another week and died on the fifth. I never saw him, only his wife walking to the pharmacy in the morning, very upright and very quickly. I am forty years old, in the tenth year of my consumption, and he came to the same resort and did not even have time to unpack his suitcase.

### *Badenweiler, September 1900*

September is warm, and at night the pears fall from the trees in my landlady's garden so loudly that I wake thinking someone is knocking. They wrote in August that Vladimir Solovyov had died, and I read his last book, Three Conversations, with the tale of the Antichrist at the end. His Antichrist is a remarkable man: a benefactor and an ascetic, who writes a book about universal peace and prosperity that moves socialists and bishops alike to tears, and does more good for mankind than anyone before him, all because he loves only himself and does not believe in Christ. As I read, I recognized, of course, not the Antichrist himself, but what remained of me after Korennaya: a calling to do good with no god behind it any longer.

There is another passage, more troubling still. At thirty-three, in despair, this man throws himself from a cliff at night. An invisible force catches him, he sees shining eyes, hears a voice that demands nothing of him, and a cold current enters him, after which he writes his book in three weeks. I read this twice and noted the difference as I would in a patient: in Solovyov, what entered was cold, while mine is sweet, and after that night I wrote no book about peace. I am writing only this diary.

# PART IV

### *Menton, December 1900*

For twelve years the words *sal* = *habitude* have stood in pencil in the margin of my manuscript copy. Today I crossed them out.

Habit is only one kind of salt, and hardly the most important. The wine merchant says that everything done settles, and for a long time I understood this to mean that what has settled subsequently performs for a man what he himself performed before. That happens, and the old woman who recited the "Our Father" is an example. But there is something else that I saw at the clinic every day without noticing it. In a case history, every entry is made on its own day and in its own hand, and none follows from the one before it; nevertheless, they all lie in a single case file under one name, and from the file one can see that the patient is the same. Salt, as I now understand it, is such a file.[80] Each entry is written anew, and the free act described in Chapter Six is one such new entry; salt gathers them under a single name and allows yesterday's entry to be found and presented to the man today as his own.

Bergson argues in Matter and Memory that memory is not stored in the brain like papers in a cabinet, and that the brain merely selects from the past what is needed for action. I read him in 1897 and argued

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[80] The file just sits there. The doctor's holding is always in progress. Salt holds as long as the action is repeated and crumbles when you drop it. You can try other images. A disease runs its course in the patient on its own, and the river holds the whirlpool. Neither can stop, so it's the same salt in motion. Scheherazade comes closer. The story lives as long as it's being told. It picks up again every night and can break off. Or take marriage. The certificate sits in a file, and the marriage exists as long as two people hold it and either can leave. All these images lose the one thing the file had, the writing on the cover.

A song works even better. The lyrics are salt. You can write them down and put them in a songbook. Meaning and melody are what the song does while it's being sung. The voice is the Name. It can be any voice as long as it's pleasant, since it is a song. What's peculiar to it hardly affects the meaning or the melody. Still, it's the only way to hear whose song it is this time. You can't put a voice in a file. Sometimes the voice changes the meaning too. You can sing a lullaby and make it scary.

with every page, like a physician who had seen hundreds of strokes. Now he puts a question to me that I cannot escape: if memory is not in the brain, what holds the file when the brain is gone? My answer, for the present, is this. The brain is the shelf on which the file rests during life, and the shelf collapses with the body.[81] After that, someone must hold the file, or it must hold itself, or nobody holds it and the sheets scatter.

### *Menton, January 1901*

In Chapter Nine the wine merchant offers two outcomes. The one who has a Name comes home to a place where nobody holds him, while the one who stands upon salt drowns when the water undermines the crust. *If I hold to my file*, a third outcome has been omitted between these two, and in my opinion it is the most common. The owner may hold the file himself, in which case he is the serpent biting its own tail; nobody may hold it, in which case the sheets scatter, as would the contents of a cabinet whose doors and roof had been removed; or someone else may hold it, someone who needs it for some purpose. It is this third outcome that the Church promises us: eternal life with the One who remembers us.[82] The dead in Bobok do

[81] In the Phaedo, Simmias says the soul is the harmony of the body, like the harmony of a lyre. Break the lyre and the harmony is gone. It's the same shelf. Socrates objects that a harmony can't argue with its strings, while the soul argues with the body all the time. It tells you to go without food when you're hungry and to walk on when you're tired. So the soul is what can refuse its own instrument.

[82] In terms of the song, it goes like this. You can sing someone else's song in your own voice. Other people gave you the words and the melody. That's how most people sing. You can sing your own. You can sing along with the choir of angels that sings "Holy, holy, holy" without end. That's what the Church promises. Your voice is still there. The only one who hears it on its own is the One who remembers. When the sheets fall apart, nobody sings the song anymore. Only the words are still going around in other people's songs. The singers in a choir that sings forever probably can't hear it either. That's how the Pythagoreans explained why nobody hears the music of the spheres. It's been sounding since birth, and there's no silence to compare it with.

not belong here; inertia alone holds them until they decay, and that is the same scattering, only slower. Father N. of Rue Daru would call the holder God, a Babylonian would call him Marduk, and the late Boullan would give him a less agreeable name. To my mind, all these are instances of the same holding, differing only in who does it.

*At night*. I do not seem to hold my own file. It is too early for it to scatter. That leaves the third possibility, and I do not know who.

### *Menton, February 1901*

In my student days everyone read Büchner and Vogt, just as twenty years before us Bazarov advised Arkady to give his father Force and Matter in place of Pushkin: thought is secreted by the brain as bile is secreted by the liver, and man is what he eats. I agreed with them readily, and the less that remained in me of Korennaya, the more readily I agreed. I found an argument against them in another physiologist. Back in the seventies, du Bois-Reymond declared that the movement of atoms in the brain could never explain why I experience pain or sweetness, and ended his lecture with the word *ignorabimus*: we shall not know. An honest argument.

Something else is unpleasant. Rereading my entry about the file, I caught myself rejoicing at the crack Bergson had made in materialism, as a patient rejoices when his physician discovers that he has something other than the disease he feared. I do not want everything to be as simple as Feuerbach would have it, and this unwillingness is just as much an act of will as Büchner's willingness. Feuerbach explained God by man's desire for Him, and in that he was right, except that he himself wanted there to be no God, while Büchner wanted to decay in peace, without a file or a holder. It seems that everyone believes in whatever direction his will has turned, and finds the arguments afterward, as patient J. found the sun to explain her umbrella. Chapter Six of Ostia says this of the act: it chooses its own reason.

One thing prevents me from writing that it is all a matter of taste. I could believe whatever I pleased, but it was my landlady who asked about the lady in 1897, without any prompting from me.

### *Menton, June 1901*

A question any student would have asked me at his first lecture, which I am only now asking myself: who holds a man when he sleeps without dreaming or lies under chloroform? As a student, and later at the Salpêtrière, I administered anesthetics on many occasions, and on waking the patients always asked the same question: already? Between their first breath through the mask and their awakening, no time had passed for them. At first I thought of the serpent in Chapter Seven, as though it opened its jaws for a while. But the serpent is the Name, and most of my patients have no Name; they are held, like the rest of us, by salt: the body, habits, relatives, a file in an archive. In that case sleep is no different from daytime. By day, too, a man dies a little at a time: yesterday he did something, and today he says he could never have done such a thing, and he speaks the truth, because the man who did it did not continue, and the only connection between them is that their entries lie in the same file. I read my own entry from 1888 as though it belonged to someone else. Most lives are a succession of little deaths stitched together by salt, and the night merely makes the seam more visible. For one who has a Name, the question remains: does it sleep along with him? Whether I have one, I do not know, and I cannot test it on myself: no one writes in his sleep.

### *Badenweiler, September 1901*

Father N. from the church on Rue Daru has come to take the waters. He has grown older and suffers from his kidneys, and has settled in a neighboring boardinghouse. In the evenings we walk to the castle and back, and he has never once asked whether I receive communion, for which I am grateful. I do not tell him about my notebook.

### *Badenweiler, March 1902*

I reread the fifteenth chapter of John in Greek, as I once read it at school, and only now noticed that the Father is called γεωργός. In Church Slavonic the word is "worker," in Russian "vinedresser"; gentle words, belonging to a garden. The Greek is simpler: a farmer, a man who cultivates the land for what he intends to harvest from it. The passage goes on to say that the branch remains on the vine as long as it bears fruit; the fruitless branch is cut away, and the withered branches are gathered and thrown into the fire. As a child I heard this read as a consolation, and that is how I listened: the vine, the branches, all together, warmth. Now I hear a farm in the same verse, and a strict one. Last autumn Father N. came here to take the waters, and I asked him how he understood the passage. He replied that the love of God consists in abiding by His commandments, and recited the tenth verse: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love." We were both satisfied with the conversation. He never noticed that he had said precisely what I had.

### *Badenweiler, April 1902*

Father N. recited the tenth verse in the voice one uses to offer consolation, but ever since I have been unable to get the word "if" out of my mind. The branch remains on the vine if it bears fruit, and those who keep the commandments abide in love. Love here holds, and holds on a condition, and that condition is a commandment. I went back to the first commandment given to man and found it in the second chapter of Genesis: of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. The prohibition and its punishment stand in the same verse, and before that verse there had been no prohibition in the garden, so man lived there as a branch lives on the vine, breaking nothing because there was nothing to break. The wine merchant writes about this passage in Chapter Six: Eve reached out her hand of her own

accord, and that was her first act and her death at once, because it took her out from under the commandment. Thirteen years ago I read that chapter as a delusion about free will. Now I see that he is speaking of the same thing as John, only from the opposite end: one is held by a commandment, and to escape that holding is to do what the commandment forbids.

*Same place, a week later*

In January 1889 I wrote that one umbrella was enough to bring Chapter Six down. Patient J. opened the umbrella at another person's command and invented a reason for doing so, and I concluded that this refuted the author, who maintained that the act chooses its own reason. I was mistaken. At that moment J. was carrying out the content of an action implanted in her, as a branch bears the fruit required of it, and the act described in Chapter Six was entirely absent. Chapter Four says this plainly: the one who enters holds the man by his will, and his actions can be predicted from the person he serves. The intern held J. for a quarter of an hour, Boullan held his patients for years, and the One who gave the commandment in the garden holds, if John is to be believed, all who abide in His love forever. The author was speaking of two different things, the act and holding, and for thirteen years I mistook them for one.

### *Badenweiler, late April 1902*

I explained my correction concerning J. in a letter to R. He replied on four pages, and the entire letter comes down to one question, to which I have no answer. How am I to distinguish an act from an executed suggestion if the person acting feels no difference? J. was certain that she opened the umbrella because the sun was dazzling her, and the wine merchant, reaching for the cup, was equally certain. If I call every action for which I can find another person's command an execution, and every action for which I find no such command an act, then I have won the argument in advance and left myself no possible

way to lose it. If no case can ever show me that I am mistaken, R. writes, how am I to know that I am right?

I tried to answer with the test from Chapter Three: can you do it, and can you leave it undone, and let both answers be true at the same hour. But J. might have refused under a suggestion from the same intern, and once again I would have had no way of knowing whose refusal it was. The wine merchant himself writes that conduct cannot reveal the difference and advises against judging freedom by actions. It follows that I have nothing by which to judge it either. R.'s letter has lain unanswered for a second week.

### *Badenweiler, early May 1902*

I answered R., though not quite as he would have wished. There seems to be a distinguishing mark, except that it can be seen only from within. J. opened the umbrella as one drinks water when thirsty, without weighing anything: there was nothing between the command and her hand. A decision is different. A man sees one possibility and another before him and chooses one, and there is no need for him to like them equally; it is enough that his preference should not in itself mean that the preferred possibility will be chosen. If preference has already settled the matter, choice is mere appearance, and there is no difference between it and the umbrella. A drunkard who has been drinking every evening for thirty years may remain free by this measure if his craving for a drink does not yet settle the matter and he settles it himself; or he may be in bondage if the craving has long since been deciding for him. From outside, these two drunkards cannot be distinguished, and there R. is right. From within, at least, the distinction ought to be accessible: a man knows whether both possibilities were open to him or whether only one appeared to be open. But whether he may deceive himself even here, I cannot prove.

What followed was something I had not expected and which R. had not asked about. Augustine teaches that the highest freedom consists no longer in the ability to sin or refrain from sin, but in the

impossibility of sin. According to Thomas Aquinas, God necessarily wills His own good, but does not necessarily will created things and is free to create them or refrain from creating them. Thus He has alternatives, only not where I had been looking for them.

But if God cannot fail to will His own good, then in this respect He is unfree by my criterion. His will does not determine what to prefer here: the preference is given before any choice, and no other preference is possible. Eve at the tree could prefer obedience and nevertheless disobey. It follows that in this one respect she was freer than her creator. Augustine would call this a lower freedom; the wine merchant, perhaps, the only freedom worth speaking of. I did not send R. this part of my reply.

### *Badenweiler, May 10, 1902*

I was rereading my reply to R. and asked myself a question I had never asked before: why does a man cease to decide for himself at all? Thirst does not entail drinking now, nor does love entail remaining with the woman one loves. These are all reasons, and none of them reaches out a hand on a man's behalf. It is different when a rule stands between the reason and the action, a rule by which the answer is known in advance. Kant demanded that a man act only according to a rule which he could will to become a law for everyone, and called this self-legislation. But a law, once established, operates tomorrow as well, when the man who established it might wish something different, and I do not know whether Kant would have considered such a legislator free.

At the Salpêtrière we once treated a retired major who at forty had taken a vow never to drink and had kept it for twenty years. At his daughter's wedding someone offered him a glass, and he drew back his hand without thinking, as one draws one's hand away from something hot. Everyone praised his firmness. I praised it too, but now I see that at that moment the vow he had made twenty years earlier

was deciding for him, just as reliably as the liquor had once decided for him.

R. is my friend, and I value that friendship. Suppose he betrays something entrusted to him, and then betrays another confidence. Would I cease to regard him as a friend? I do not know, and would not wish to know in advance. If friendship obliges me to love him under all circumstances, the decision has already been made, and R. may do whatever he pleases to me without changing my feelings toward him. If, on the other hand, I resolve to cease loving him at the first betrayal, the decision has again been made. In either case, tomorrow's R. will have to deal with today's rule of mine. Yet I may forgive him a betrayal, even one that is not the first, and remain free in doing so, provided the forgiveness is my own.

It follows that salt is recognized by an action being performed according to a determination that no longer permits revision. Whether the action itself remains unchanged has nothing to do with it. The major might have drunk every evening and been freer than he was on the day of the wedding. I did not send R. the letter about this either: he would have taken the third paragraph personally.

### *Badenweiler, May 1902*

An objection to my own argument which has kept me awake for three nights. If an act is nothing beyond the doing itself, with no nature behind it from which it follows, does holding its continuation not mean holding its content as well? For then there is nothing to continue except what is being done. It follows that the holder of the file also writes the entries, and there is no difference between J. and anyone who is held.

I found the answer in the hospital archive, which I had seen for twenty years without ever properly examining it. The archive keeps the patients' files; each bears a name, and under that name lie all the entries made by different physicians in different years. The archivist

holds the file but writes none of its entries, while the name on the cover holds the entries together but says nothing about their contents: the name alone cannot tell us what illness the patient suffered. Holding, therefore, takes place in two steps. The holder holds the name; the name holds the sequence. And the name itself, that little piece of salt resembling the word on the cover, contains none of the content of the actions. To hold the name is to hold the continuation, so that tomorrow's entry will go into the same file. To hold the content is to dictate the entries, and that requires a different means, the one used in the garden. The intern dictated to J.; the archive merely kept her file.

I remembered that the theologians have known this for a long time, though they call it something else. Thomas teaches that God preserves a creature in being and concurs in each of its actions, and must then explain why the fall of the angels was not His doing. He escapes the difficulty by saying that evil is a privation and that a privation has no efficient cause. Without my archivist, he would have had to admit that the angels fell with God's concurrence.

*The following day*

If She holds me, my actions remain my own so long as She preserves the file without dictating anything in it. I went through the entries in this notebook and found none of which I could say that it had been dictated.[83] This proves nothing.

### *Badenweiler, late May 1902*

Yesterday I remembered a file that I myself kept in 1887. The patient, a locksmith of about forty with a brain tumor, died in our care in March, and his case history grew thicker after his death than it had

[83] Usually it's the words someone dictates. You can tell a possessed person by the voice. He can talk about the weather in a voice that isn't his. The doctor has no way to test this on himself. Your voice sounds different from the inside, and almost nobody recognizes their own voice on a recording.

been during his lifetime. The autopsy report was pasted into it, along with descriptions of tissue sections which an intern spent six months examining under a microscope; then came a letter from the widow asking about her pension, and two years later an offprint of an article in which the man appeared as Case Number Seven. The file was preserved, entries continued to accumulate, and the name on the cover gathered them under itself as before. The locksmith himself did nothing during all that time.

So the holder preserves the file and the name holds the sequence, and I now see that this is insufficient to call a man alive. Preserving what has been written is one thing. Preserving the person to whom it belongs, so that everything written about him concerns that one person, is another. Preserving his ability to write something tomorrow in his own hand that did not exist yesterday is a third. All this time I had been putting them in the same file. The archive held the locksmith as a trace, and perhaps held him as a unity too, since everything about him lay under one name, but he could write no more. How does holding of the third kind differ from the first two if the holder and the cover are the same?[84]

Yesterday there was a commotion in the Kursaal. The grand duchess, who spends her summers in a palace here, had arrived, and the entire hall rose to its feet except me, because I had dozed off over the newspaper. When I opened my eyes I saw an elderly lady in gray standing before me, asking in French whether I needed anything, since I looked so pale. I said I needed nothing and thanked her. She nodded and went on to her table, while the Germans at the next table

[84] In the Gospel of Truth from Nag Hammadi, the living book of the living appeared in the hearts of little children. The book of life isn't on a shelf in heaven. No one could take it until the one who was killed for it came, and he was nailed to the tree with it. A living book is one that's still being written, and it lies where it's written. Here the cover and the keeper are one. The strange part is that it's in children. Everybody holds them, their mother, their nanny, the school. They hardly have any entries of their own, and the only things being written so far are things still undecided.

stared at me all evening as though I had lit a pipe in church before their eyes.

### *Badenweiler, June 1902*

*June 3*. In Isaiah: "Fear not: I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine." Formerly I heard tenderness in these words. Now I hear what is written: He named me, and therefore I am His.

*June 5*. In the Apocalypse, the one who overcomes is promised a white stone with a new name which no one knows except the one who receives it. The wine merchant warned of this stone: a name that fits so perfectly that it seems you gave birth to it yourself was most likely written by another hand, and the only way to test this is to try to erase the inscription. John promises the stone as a reward, and according to my archive the reward is real: the one who gives the name will preserve the file. Only the file will then belong to him.[85]

*June 7*. The builders of the tower say: let us make ourselves a name, lest we be scattered over the face of the whole earth, and for this very reason they are scattered, while their city receives a name they did not choose for it: Babel, confusion. In a German commentary I found something that is invisible in the Russian translation: the Hebrew word for "name" is *shem*, and immediately after the tower begins the genealogy of Shem, Noah's son, whose name is that same shem, and it ends with Abram. In the following chapter God says to Abram: I will make thy name great. The two neighboring chapters stand opposed to each other: the man who makes a name for himself is scattered, while the man whose name God makes becomes the ancestor of a people. Here Genesis and Ostia disagree in earnest: for the wine merchant a Name is possible, but only one's own, while Genesis punishes a man for making his own name.

*June 9*. When Adam had eaten, it was said: lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever. With man's

[85] The rider on the white horse himself has a name written that only he knows.

first act, immortality is closed to him, and a cherub with a flaming sword guards the way to the tree. It follows that the file of one who has escaped the commandment is no longer preserved. Two paths remain for him, the same two described in Chapter Nine: to hold himself, or to be thrown onto the refuse heap. The third path, with which the Church consoles us, is closed to him by the cherub until he returns beneath the commandment, which is, in fact, what the whole Gospel is about.

### *Badenweiler, July 1902*

The heat. Yesterday I was summoned to a patient at a villa above the town. A councilor's wife from Freiburg sent her maid to say that Dr. Sch. was away and the matter could not wait. The patient proved to be a pug of about twelve, who was having as much trouble breathing in the sun as I was. I advised her to keep him in the shade, give him water, and stop feeding him pastries, and the councilor's wife said that nobody had ever explained it to her so clearly. The next morning I received a basket of peaches and a visiting card inscribed: "To the Doctor, with gratitude, Bobby." It is the first fee I have received in twelve years, and I received it from a dog.

The Son says: I am in the Father, and the Father in Me; and in the final chapter of Matthew we are instructed to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. In the name, singular, although there are three persons. It follows that the Trinity has one file for all three[86], and each person holds it together with the others, so that none holds it from below and none is held from above. The holding is mutual and closed upon itself, like the serpent in Chapter Seven, except that this serpent has three heads. In the Instruction on Contagion, the author makes fun of East and West for calling each other schismatics for four hundred years over the single

[86] One song in three voices. The words and melody are shared, and the voices stay distinct. In unison, three would sound like one.

phrase "and from the Son." I no longer find the dispute amusing. The Latins teach that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, the Greeks that He proceeds from the Father alone, and what they are disputing is who holds whom within the Trinity. Palamas taught that the saints are deified, that is, they enter the divine life and its energies, while the essence of God remains inaccessible to them. In other words, the saints are drawn into the movement of holding without becoming holders themselves. If I ever explain this to Father N., he will say that I have understood everything correctly and spoiled everything.

*Two days later*. If everyone is held by someone, the chain must end somewhere. If it ends with one self-holding being above all others, that is the God of Scripture. If it ends with many, the Babylonians are right, for Marduk is one among many and receives his fifty names from other gods. The wine merchant himself, judging by Chapter Ten, where gods meet and depart from their encounter changed, is on the side of the Babylonians.

### *Badenweiler, August 1902*

August drags on, like every August at the resort. In the mornings I spend half an hour in the inhalation room before a pipe from which warm, salty steam emerges, reading until my glasses fog over; then milk, the park, the table d'hôte, and back to my room and books until night. There is nothing to tell about such days, and I have noticed that my entries increasingly resemble the articles in the Moscow journal sent to me: long, and without a single event. R., if he ever reads this, will say that I have finally found my calling, and that it is a dull one.

I have known the opening of John by heart since childhood, yet I had never heard how it sounds beside the Babylonian account. There, at first, were the salt waters, and the heaven above had not yet been named, and everything that later received a name emerged from that sea, which Marduk had to split apart. Smith noted as early as 1876 that the Hebrew word for the deep in the second verse of Genesis, over

which the Spirit moved, belongs to the same family of words as Tiamat. Genesis, then, still remembers the sea.

John begins as though there had never been a sea: in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and all things were made by Him. Before the name, there is nothing in his account to name, and no one to split apart. Then it says that the light shines in darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it, and the Greek verb can mean both "did not understand" and "did not overcome," so I cannot tell whether John is speaking of a darkness that failed to understand or a darkness that failed in its attempt. A few verses later: He came unto His own, and His own received Him not, but to those who received Him and believed in His name He gave the power to become the children of God. To receive a name and enter a family is accomplished in the same way among the Babylonians and in John. There is only one difference: in John, nobody remembers the sea.

*Same place, a week later*

Rejoice that your names are written in heaven, Christ tells the seventy on their return from preaching. In the Apocalypse, the one who overcomes is promised that his name will not be blotted out of the Book of Life. This book is the archive, only a heavenly one[87], and the most terrible threat is to blot out a name, that is, to cease preserving the file. To the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection, Christ replied that God had called Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that God is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live unto Him. Unto Him. I read the passage three times: the patriarchs are alive because they have a holder, and they live in Him, rather than in themselves.

[87] At John's Last Judgment they open the books, then another one, the Book of Life. The dead are judged by their deeds. The archive has two parts. One set of books decides how you're judged, the other whether you get in.

### *Badenweiler, September 1902*

The grapes are being harvested below the town. A white vine grows here which the locals call Gutedel. From morning until dark, women stand on the slopes with knives and baskets, while men carry full tubs on their backs down to the presses. I asked an old vinedresser why the vines in one row were almost bare, and he explained that they had been cut back hard in spring because the excess growth only drinks the sap and yields nothing, and because the vine loves the knife. That evening the tavern served young wine, cloudy and sweet, the kind drunk only during these few weeks, and I had a glass although Dr. Sch. had forbidden it. The wine merchant probably sold something much like it, only from the Moselle.

In Chapter Ten of Ostia, the wine merchant recalls the eighty-first Psalm[88]: God stood in the assembly of gods and said to them, ye are gods, but ye shall die like men. And he asks whether anyone in the assembly answered Him. I found the answer in John, and am surprised that the wine merchant failed to notice it. When the Jews took up stones because Christ had called Himself the Son of God, He reminded them of this Psalm: if those to whom the word of God came were called gods, what then of the One whom the Father sanctified and sent? The gods in the Psalm, it follows, are those who were addressed, those who were named. They received their divinity together with their names, just as Marduk received his fifty names from the other gods, and therefore they can be released from it and will then die like men. Christ answers the Psalm from within the assembly and places Himself beside them, with only one qualification: He was not merely called; He was sent.

The Jews never did throw their stones.

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[88] *Publisher's note*. Psalm 81 in the Septuagint and Russian Orthodox numbering corresponds to Psalm 82 in the Hebrew and most English Bibles.

### *Badenweiler, October 1902*

Moses asked for a name at the burning bush, and the answer was: "I AM WHO AM." The Greeks rendered it *ho ōn*, "the One Who Is," and the Slavonic kept the Greek, while a German commentary on Exodus says that in Hebrew the words may also be read in the future tense: "I will be what I will be." If so, the name tells us nothing about the One who bears it except that He Himself will decide who He shall be. It resembles the cover of a file on which nothing is written except that the file exists. The wine merchant writes that Moses received a serpent in place of his staff and was commanded to take it by the tail. Now I see why the passage interests him so much. A Name containing nothing beyond the fact that its bearer holds Himself is his serpent biting its tail[89], and the God of Exodus, who said of Himself "I will be what I will be," is closer to the act of Chapter Six than to the throne of Chapter Ten. In John, Christ says, "Before Abraham was, I am," and it is the same name spoken of Himself. For these words they took up stones against Him, and I think I understand those who did so: they heard Him declare that He holds Himself.

### *Menton, December 1902*

The captain is here again, and with him has returned his habit of bringing newspaper clippings about spirits to breakfast, collecting them as other people collect stamps. The first came from an English newspaper. In Birmingham, a medium famous for summoning great men from the dead had fortified himself with gin before the séance, and had fortified himself thoroughly. The spirit of Washington emerged from behind a screen before the audience, steadying himself with one hand upon it, overturned a chair, hiccupped twice, and

[89] To hear your own voice, you have to hold what sounded a moment ago. Otherwise you hear only a scrap of sound. To hold yourself is to hold your past. The serpent bites the tail that's already behind it. But if God has no time, there's nothing behind Him. What does He hold on to, then?

began a speech about freedom which he never finished. When one of the guests asked why the father of the American republic could not stand on his feet, the organizer explained that lesser entities had intercepted the channel of communication and were causing interference. The captain thinks the organizer handled the situation splendidly. I think the diagnosis is as good as many I have heard at the clinic.

*A day later.* The second clipping is old, some eighteen years, and the captain preserves it like a relic. The Coulombs, husband and wife, who worked for Blavatsky at Adyar and later quarreled with her, told journalists how the letters from Tibetan masters, which fell straight from the ceiling before the guests, were arranged. On one occasion, Madame Blavatsky is said to have raised her hands and summoned a message, but no message fell. She called more loudly, and still nothing happened, until at last an irritated whisper came from above, behind a curtain: Madame, the cord is stuck. Shall I pull harder, or will you come and fetch it yourself? Whether this is true I do not know; the Coulombs had reasons to tell any story they pleased. But it is the only story about the Mahatmas that I believe from the first word to the last.

The captain brought the third clipping with particular delight. In London a medium who produced luminous matter from his mouth, the substance Richet christened ectoplasm, choked on it at the most solemn moment of the séance. Instead of a voice from beyond the grave, the audience heard coughing.[90] The medium spat several arshins of wet muslin onto the table, apologized, and went behind the curtain for a drink of water, and the spirits did not return that evening. The captain laughed until he cried, while I thought that in such a profession a medium would do well to have a physician at hand.

[90] It was the only voice in the whole session that definitely belonged to the person whose throat it came from.

### *Menton, January 1903*

The wine merchant discusses the house swept clean from the twelfth chapter of Matthew in Chapter Four and asks why the owner swept a house in which he did not intend to live. The Greek says that the spirit found his house σχολάζοντα, idle, and the word is related to our "school," which also began with leisure. The house stands idle, just as a man stands in Nothing when his habits have departed and he has begun nothing new, and there is no one to hold him. But there is something else in this passage which the wine merchant did not note. The expelled spirit wanders through waterless places seeking rest and finds none, and returns because it has nowhere to be. Malice has nothing to do with it. It follows that such a spirit needs the house more than the house needs the spirit, and that the spirit is held by the one in whom it lives.

This also makes the possessed man of Gadara in Mark easier to understand. Asked his name, he replies: Legion, for we are many, and they have no single name. Once expelled, they beg to enter the swine, if only to avoid being left without a home, and the herd rushes down the steep bank into the sea. Without a host to occupy, the water carries them away, the same water that undermines the crust in Chapter Nine. The man who has been healed asks to follow Christ, but Christ refuses and tells him to go home to his own people. The wine merchant noticed this and recorded it without comment. I would add that, in the whole Gospel, this seems to be the only man healed who was not taken into service.

### *Menton, February 1903*

In the seventh chapter of Romans, the Apostle writes that he was once alive without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and he died, and the commandment intended for life brought him death. This is the second chapter of Genesis told from within. Paul dies as soon as the commandment comes, without having done

anything yet: it is enough that what is forbidden has become possible. The wine merchant's Eve dies when she reaches out her hand. One movement separates them, and I do not know which of the two is more exact.

A few verses later the Apostle complains: "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." Ribot divided his book into two halves, those who cannot refrain and those who cannot begin, whereas Paul placed both halves in a single verse and in a single person, himself.

*Later*. He ends by asking who shall deliver him from this body of death. In twenty years I have listened to many patients who asked the same question.

### *Menton, February 15, 1903*

Today, according to our calendar, is the Sunday of the Prodigal Son. My mother wept every year when this Gospel was read, and as a child I thought she was weeping for the younger son. Only much later did I understand that she was probably weeping for the elder.

The father in the parable does with his two sons exactly what I called the two forms of holding last May, and understands the difference better than I do. He gives the younger his portion and lets him go; what the son does in the far country is neither dictated nor forbidden by the father. Yet when the son returns, the father says that he was dead and is alive again, which means that throughout this time he held the son's name, rather than his actions. The son comes home with a prepared request to be taken on as a hired servant, that is, to be held by contract and wages, but the father does not allow him to finish and puts a ring on his finger, the seal of the household: he will be held as a son, by name. The elder never left and never once disobeyed an order. He was held by a commandment, and he remains standing outside when music is playing in the house. "Thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine," the father tells him, and the elder does not hear it,

for he has regarded himself as a hired worker for twenty years. The commandment kept him in the house and kept him out of the celebration.

I left long ago and quietly, like the younger son, and apparently have not yet come to myself. If someone brought me a ring now, I do not know whether I would reach out my hand.

### *Menton, late February 1903*

In the Russian church, an old woman at the candle counter was scolding a young woman for placing a candle before the wrong icon. The young woman moved it; the old woman continued scolding her, and I left without waiting to see how it ended. I do not love this old woman. Nor do I love our captain when he tells the story of the black Mass for the third time at breakfast. Christ commanded us to love even our enemies, and these two are not even my enemies. If I became a Christian again, I would have to find a place for both of them in my love. Otherwise, what sort of Kingdom of God would it be, with half the blessed already quarreling at the gates?

A theologian would object that loving someone does not mean feeling tenderness toward everyone: the commandment requires us to wish our neighbor well and help him when he is in need. Granted. But if I extend a hand to the old woman because I have been commanded to do so for everyone, the action has been performed before she ever approached me. In her place there might have been the captain, an unknown passerby, or yesterday's thief, and the answer is ready for each of them. The wine merchant writes that another's distress does not perform the act for a man. It follows that universal love should not perform it for him either.

Humility, in that case, is the art of bringing the will into conformity with a pattern until it ceases to resist. In the sitting room of our boardinghouse stands a clock that strikes every hour and has never once made a mistake. Give it hands and it will distribute alms; teach it

words and it will forgive offenses. The clock need not know who stands before it. Little more is required of the perfect righteous man.

For that matter, I myself spent twenty years helping patients when they asked, and only recently began to wonder to whom my help belonged. My treatment has not reduced the number of the sick, and my questions have reduced it even less.

### *Menton, March 1903*

I have not recorded my own case here, as I would a patient's, since the summer when I reached the castle ruins without stopping, and that was seven years ago. I am forty-three, in the thirteenth year of my consumption, and my hair is turning gray faster than that of men my age. The cavity remains unchanged and is firmly walled off, but this winter I have coughed up blood twice, a small amount on each occasion, and after the second I spent a week in bed. I walk less, along the promenade and back, always at twilight, when the chairs begin to empty. I sleep until noon, read until three in the morning, and my landlady has long since stopped asking why my lamp is still burning.

On nights when the cough prevents me from lying down, I allow myself a quarter of a grain of morphine and take care that it is no more often than twice a week. I record this so that I may notice if I begin allowing myself more.

My great-uncle's inheritance is dwindling more slowly than I expected, since I spend little: books, journals, a room at my landlady's, and milk. Russian visitors to the resort, having heard that I am a physician, come to consult me, and I give them advice but accept no money, since I have no license to practice here. They bring me wine or chocolates, and one general's wife knitted me a scarf.

Of those who sat beside me in their chairs on the promenade in 1891, not one remains here. What took up residence in me in 1890 is still with me, and I do not feel lonely, which should probably be recorded as a symptom.

### *Menton, April 1903*

In John: unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; if it dies, it brings forth much fruit. The wine merchant observes that the parable says nothing further about the grain which remained alone, and that it is counted as lost. In my archive that grain has its own file, and holds it itself: it did not become an ear of wheat and therefore remained itself, but to the farmer of the fifteenth chapter it represents a loss, since there is no harvest to be had from it. The next verse says the same thing without a parable: he who loves his life shall lose it. To preserve oneself is to perish, and behind the word "perish" stands the farmer's account book.

From Jacob at the stream of Jabbok, the wine merchant took his question of whether it was an encounter or a seal, and he said everything that could be said about the new name and the lameness. I noticed something else in the same chapter. As he departs at dawn, Jacob names the place Peniel because he has seen God face to face and his life has been preserved. Genesis adds that the children of Israel do not eat the sinew in the thigh to this day, because He touched that sinew in Jacob. The night when one man was given a new name settled among his descendants as a prohibition in the kitchen, and thousands of people who have never wrestled with anyone until dawn cut that sinew out of their meat because their fathers did so. An encounter repeated by other hands becomes salt, and here one can see it in a piece of beef. She who comes to me has never once asked my name, and She will leave no trace of Herself in the kitchen: I have no descendants.

### *Menton, May 1903*

The general's wife who knitted me the scarf writes from St. Petersburg that Monsieur Philippe has finally departed. People here have been speaking of this healer from Lyon for three years, always in lowered voices. The Montenegrin grand duchesses are said to have introduced

him to the Emperor and Empress when the imperial couple were in France, after which he settled at court. He had no medical diploma, and, according to reports, at the sovereign's wish he was made a doctor of medicine and given an official rank. Last summer he promised the Empress an heir, her pregnancy was announced, and in August it emerged that there had been no pregnancy. After that the man from Lyon was sent home.

At the Salpêtrière we used to demonstrate such pregnancies to students: the abdomen enlarges, menstruation ceases, the patient feels movement within her, and all this proceeds from a single desire reinforced by another person's promise. If the general's wife writes the truth, the man from Lyon did to the Empress what the intern did to our J., only the umbrella was the size of an empire. I studied under Charcot to earn the right to make diagnoses, and I have no right to practice abroad, whereas Monsieur Philippe received his diploma for making no diagnoses at all. Lyon, apparently, is a city from which physicians without the right to practice come. What Boullan might have taught me, I never learned.

### *Menton, February 1904*

The Japanese attacked our squadron at Port Arthur during the night, and in a single day the Russians on the promenade changed from holidaymakers into patriots. The general's wife writes that students in St. Petersburg are marching along Nevsky Prospect with flags and singing "God Save the Tsar." I finished reading the newspaper and went for a walk. Later it occurred to me that I had received the first news of the war with only one thought: how many men would return from it with consumption.

### *Venice, April 1904*

R. and his wife spent Easter in Venice and invited me to join them, and I went, although any physician on the Riviera would have said

that a consumptive had no business visiting Venice in spring. In the Doge's Palace, in a room which hardly anyone enters, hang four panels by Bosch, and on one of them is what the wine merchant describes in Chapter Nine. I expected to see his description and saw something different. The passage through which the souls are carried is formed of rings, alternating light and dark, like the cross section of a tree, and as the souls ascend they become smaller and lighter, while angels hold them from below, gently, as nurses hold a patient being moved from one bed to another. The light at the end is even and comes from no source, the very light by which I recognized Bosch in the engravings. I have read accounts by mountaineers who fell into ravines and survived: during the fall they felt well, surrounded by light and peace, and none wished to return. The wine merchant laughs at them and compares them to drunkards the morning after. I would not laugh at them: these souls are being carried to a place where they will be held, and they have no reason to look back. The panel resembles my night in 1890 in only one respect: there, as in that place, nobody looks at the observer.

*The following day*

R., who reads guidebooks as though they were novels, told me that these panels were first mentioned in the house of Cardinal Grimani in 1521. The wine merchant writes of the panel as already being in Venice in 1516, and Bosch himself died in the summer of that year. The explanation is simple: a painting may have been purchased and brought to a place long before anyone thought to record its presence. I accept this explanation. R. asked why it mattered to me, and I said that I was writing about an old book.

*In the evening.* At Florian's I explained my entire theory of the archive to R. aloud for the first time. He listened without interrupting, then said that I had described our hospital and called it the universe: for twenty years I had filled out case histories, and now I saw files everywhere, just as a shoemaker sees lasts. That was his first point. His second was worse. If everyone is held by someone, he asked, who

holds the archivist? I replied that the chain ends with one who holds himself, and that I had written about this two years ago. Then R. asked why, knowing this, I did not hold myself, but had spent years searching for whoever was holding me. I could find no answer, and we began talking about Tintoretto.

### *Menton, May 1904*

R. kept his promise and sent me from Paris a photograph of another painting by Bosch, the one belonging to the Spanish kings at El Escorial. He bought it from a Madrid photographer and asked in his letter that I not show it to my landlady. There are three panels. On the left God presents Eve to Adam, on the right is hell, and in the center a vast meadow full of naked people, berries, birds, and glass spheres, where everyone is occupied with pleasure as diligently as the inhabitants of hell are occupied with torment. In the foreground a man stands bent over, with a bouquet of flowers growing out of his backside. In hell one sinner has musical notes written on his buttocks, and judging by those around him, singing them in chorus is one of the punishments there.[91] I laughed for a long time, then stopped. In this painting pleasure cannot be distinguished from punishment, nor decoration from torture: the flowers and the notes grow from the same place, and only a panel separates them. Bosch's hell is arranged like a workshop, where everyone is assigned his work and each torment is repeated faithfully, like a trade. The wine merchant, whose hell has no seals, would have found this hell too orderly, just as he found the Florentine's hell too orderly.

[91] Singing in a choir from someone else's score and doing it forever is a punishment in Bosch's hell. The Church promises the same thing as paradise. In paradise nobody wears the music on their butt, so there's nothing to laugh at.

## *Badenweiler, June 1904*

Chekhov has settled in the town with his wife, an actress. Like me, he is a physician, and like me, a consumptive, and judging by the way he walks from his hotel to the park, his disease is further advanced than mine. Once I saw him on a bench near the Kursaal, wearing a light-colored jacket and holding a newspaper he was not reading. I did not dare approach him: two Russian doctors suffering from the same illness have nothing to talk about except that illness.

*July 15*. Chekhov died last night at the Hotel Sommer. Dr. Sch., who treats me as well, told us over dinner that he had been summoned after midnight, that Chekhov had said to him in German, Ich sterbe, and that he had ordered champagne, as German physicians do when nothing more can be done. Chekhov drank a glass, remarked that he had not had champagne for a long time, lay down on his side, and died. Dr. Sch. told the story with professional pride and, in my opinion, had every right to it.

*July 17*. Today the landlady of a neighboring boardinghouse, a widow whom I may have seen twice, came to offer her condolences. She was so sorry about the Russian doctor, she said. He had been such a quiet gentleman, and she had never expected it to happen so soon. I thanked her and replied that I had not expected it either. Only at the door did she realize whom she had been speaking to, and she departed crossing herself, with the expression of a woman who had discovered that the dead man was alive and had deceived her into the bargain. That evening the apothecary, who had crossed my name out of his debt ledger the day before, saw me in the street and entered it again.

*August*. The newspapers report that the body was taken to Moscow in a railway car marked "For Oysters," and that at the station part of the crowd, having confused the funerals, followed the coffin of a general being buried that same day to the accompaniment of a military band. Chekhov would have appreciated it, I think. When my

time comes, there will be nobody here with whom to confuse me except him.

### *Badenweiler, September 1904*

I am writing this in the morning, while I still remember.

Last night I dreamed of a woman. I did not see her face and did not seek it. She came in the darkness and lay beside me as naturally as one lies down in one's own bed, and everything that followed was as it is when one is awake, except that there was no shame and no haste, as though there were nowhere to hurry. I awoke at dawn and lay for a long time without understanding what had changed within me, until I understood: I am no longer afraid to die. That fear had lived in me for fourteen years, so long that I had taken it for part of the disease, and now it is gone, like a toothache one remembers only after it has ceased.

With the fear, the haste departed too. All this time I had been writing the notebook as though any entry might be the last, whereas today, for the first time, I felt that I had time, and that it was worth continuing to write. As I was dressing, a date came to mind, February 10, of its own accord, like a name one has long been trying to remember.

*October*. A lady from St. Petersburg who had come for the autumn was telling us at the table d'hôte that she intended to take her husband to Nice to see a magnetizer who treated consumption by laying on hands, at twenty francs a session. Formerly I would have spent the entire evening trying to dissuade her. Yesterday I said nothing, and she departed satisfied. Sixteen years ago I wrote here that a physician who sees a patient reaching for another man's medicine bottle and says nothing ceases at that moment to be a physician, and I was indignant with the wine merchant for having said nothing to the Basel bookman. Today I reread that entry. I feel neither indignation nor shame. I look at the people at the table d'hôte as one looks at fish in an

aquarium, without malice or any wish to tap on the glass, and I see that each of them is held by someone, though they do not know it, and perhaps they are better off that way.

### *Menton, December 1904*

James lay on my table for two years with his pages uncut, and this winter, when I have nowhere left to hurry, I read him, followed by Myers, whose book on survival after death was published after the author's own death. James delivered his lectures to the Scots and collected so many confessions from converts, mystics, saints, and melancholics that Charcot might have envied certain chapters. He refuses to judge where an experience comes from and judges it by its fruits, by what the experience does to a person. The wine merchant proposed the same thing in the Instruction on the Futility of Good, then laughed that if good is recognized by its fruits, an Easter candle must be given to the serpent as well. James does not laugh, and in this, I think, lies both his only advantage over the wine merchant and his chief weakness. In the chapter on the sick soul he cites Tolstoy's Confession, and it was strange to read our count in an English retelling. My own case would belong among James's twice-born, except that my second birth came out of darkness, and he has no category for that.

Myers collected evidence that the subliminal self survives the body as one collects testimony for a court: apparitions of the dying, automatic writing, communications from mediums, all supplied with dates, signatures, and refutations. His conclusion is simple: the file holds itself, and this is true of everyone. I know that it is not so, and perhaps I know how I know, but I have nothing I could present as evidence. No court, not even Myers's, would accept my landlady who asked about the lady, the washerwoman, and the old woman whom nobody had seen as witnesses.

### *Menton, January 1905*

They write from St. Petersburg that on Sunday the troops fired upon a crowd which had gone to the Emperor, led by a priest and carrying icons and portraits of the Tsar, to ask for protection. The general's wife writes that hundreds were killed. They went to the one who holds them, and he was not in the palace.

### *Menton, late January 1905*

Letters continue to arrive from St. Petersburg about the shooting. Some call the dead martyrs; others maintain that the troops were preserving order, and everyone agrees that order is necessary. The general's wife writes that her nephew, a lieutenant, commanded a platoon at the Narva Gate, and adds that the boy sleeps peacefully. I remembered J. She had to invent her explanation, while the lieutenant received his together with his orders, and he serves the state which was also served by those upon whom he fired.

Laws are written on paper; morality is preferably written into the man himself, so that he carries it with him and obeys it even where nobody is watching. If it were possible to reach the very point where he decides, I imagine they would station a policeman there too.

The Church demands more. According to its teaching, good proceeds from God, and what He has done does not cease to be good because people suffer from it. In Genesis the Lord drowned almost everything living, leaving one righteous man with his family and a collection of animals, and the Flood is called a just punishment; it did the drowned no good. It follows that good is recognized by who performed the act, while what was performed is of no consequence. If the act belongs to God, it is good, and the only question left to dispute is why it was sent.

The same action changes its name according to whose command is invoked to justify it. Whether one serves God, the sovereign, or society, one is everywhere required to place something above one's

own decision. Whoever refuses to serve is left with two names, criminal or madman, and physicians are given charge of the second.

*February 11.* The tenth has passed. It rained, and I spent the whole day reading.

### *Menton, April 1905*

A copy of Shestov's The Apotheosis of Groundlessness has arrived from St. Petersburg, bearing the subtitle An Essay in Adogmatic Thinking. He himself, they say, intends it only for those who do not fear vertigo. It is a collection of fragments, without a beginning or a conclusion, about philosophers, morality, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky, and in each there is anger at everything that stands firm and demands that others stand upon it. I read a third of it and put it aside because I recognized myself in the fragments.

The explanation is simple: we both read Nietzsche. Except that I began writing this notebook in fragments in 1888, because of my cough and lack of time, when I had never heard of Nietzsche but had already read Ostia. It follows that the wine merchant taught me to write in this fashion, and taught me long before I understood what I was learning.

# PART V

### *Menton, October 1905*

The news from Russia grows more extraordinary by the day: the railways have gone on strike, the telegraph service too, then everything at once, they say, and finally the Emperor issued a manifesto. The Russians here are drinking champagne and quarreling over what exactly they are drinking to.

At a secondhand bookshop in Nice I bought Orlov's The History of Man's Dealings with the Devil, published in St. Petersburg last year. Half of it is a retelling of Taxil, taken seriously, complete with Palladists and Diana Vaughan, although the hoax was exposed eight years ago. Orlov evidently read The Devil in the Nineteenth Century but not the newspapers. The other half consists of stories taken from older authors, and for their sake one can forgive him Diana.

*The following evening.* Orlov's incubi come to young women in the likeness of whoever the woman is thinking of, and court them according to all the rules. I could enter this in a case history without changing a word. The next story is worse. Two unknown horsemen rode into a wedding feast, and one was invited to dance with the bride. He led her around the hall, then, before her parents and the guests, seized her with a loud cry, carried her into the courtyard, rose into the air with her, and disappeared. This is no longer a case history. It is an abduction with witnesses, and if it happened in our time, a criminal investigator would be examining it.

*Another evening.* In a German town in 1551, at Pentecost, people were feasting and drinking, and a woman at the table mentioned the devil in every other sentence. An invisible force dragged her from the house, carried her over the village, and threw her into a field, killing her. In the next chapter a broker, after an unsuccessful deal, called upon a demon, who appeared at once, hurled the man into the top of an oak tree, and threw him down onto the rocks. Orlov collects these cases as moral lessons, but they read like reports of industrial accidents in an industry consisting entirely of swearing.

*Later.* The Catholic authors quoted by Orlov maintain that Luther lived with a demon for so long that they ate an entire little barrel of salt between them, and that the demon woke him at night and helped him find arguments against the Pope. In Russia we speak of eating a pood of salt with a friend, and for the first time it occurred to me that the wine merchant would have liked the saying: long acquaintance is itself salt, and it holds both parties.

*At night.* The last story, and the best. At four in the morning a demon entered a nun's cell without knocking, sat down on her bed, and instead of frightening her began sharing monastery gossip: he had just seen Sister Magdalene, a fine one, she would be entirely theirs; but another of the sisters, alas, they would never get. And he vanished. It seems that the farmer in the fifteenth chapter of John has a neighbor who keeps the same account of the harvest, except that he counts it at night and cannot resist boasting about it.

### *Menton, November 1905*

After reading so much Orlov, I decided to test the matter myself. I reasoned as a physician: if a person who mentions the devil can be carried away by the wind, then someone who renounces Christ and destroys an icon ought to be carried at least as far as Nice, and the experiment was worth performing, since none of the authors I had read had attempted it. To keep sentiment from interfering with the purity of the experiment, I bought a paper icon of the Mother of God from a market vendor for two sous, locked my door, tore it up, burned the pieces in an ashtray, and renounced Christ aloud in Church Slavonic, using the same form of words by which Satan is renounced at baptism.

There was no wind. The room was stuffy, my landlady was rattling dishes downstairs; I counted my pulse before and after, seventy-eight and eighty-four, which can be explained by excitement and the stairs. I slept well that night.

In the morning I realized that the experiment had been improperly conducted. A paper icon costing two sous meant nothing to me, and tearing it up was no different from tearing up a newspaper. For the experiment to be properly conducted, I should have used the little icon that belonged to my mother, which has lain in my drawer since my schooldays. I opened the drawer, looked at it, and closed it again. In Chapter Three the wine merchant writes that a man who renounces his baptism according to a prescribed rite has merely performed another rite, and I performed mine faultlessly, with every word in place. That evening I was rather pleased with myself, I confess, although the same wine merchant warns in the First Rule that a man who triumphs at breaking a prohibition has obeyed it. The result of the experiment lies in my drawer, and I did not take it out.

### *Menton, December 1905*

The general's wife, who knows everything that happens at court, including things that never happened there, writes that in October, during the strikes, Papus was summoned to Tsarskoye Selo and conducted a séance. The spirit of the late Alexander III appeared and advised his son to stand firm and make no concessions, while Papus supposedly added that as long as he lived, disaster could be averted. I find this difficult to believe; I know the general's wife's letters.

But if one believes it, the spirit said exactly what the late Emperor had said every day of his life, and not a word more. I have learned to recognize such spirits: they are held by a trace, and they do not answer but repeat. The son, looking for someone to hold him, received an answer in his father's voice, recorded on a phonograph cylinder.[92]

[92] An American composer recorded himself speaking, played the recording back in a room, and recorded it again, over and over. The words sank a little more each time. In the end it was the room itself you heard, its resonant frequencies. That's how another holds you. He keeps your voice until it starts to sound like him.

Papus's promise pleases me most of all: it is worth precisely as much as his health.

### *Menton, February 11, 1906*

The tenth has passed. There was a strong wind from the sea, and I was not carried anywhere. Something else was carried away, and I noticed it only today. At Christmas I passed the Russian church just as the all-night vigil was ending. The doors were open, and the smell of wax and incense drifted into the street. Formerly this smell would have tightened my throat and made me want to enter and stand in the vestibule, where nobody could see me. This time I walked past without slowing down, and remembered having done so only today, when my landlady lit her icon lamp downstairs. When something disappeared from our house, my nanny used to say the devil had carried it off. So it was here.

### *Menton, March 1906*

Upstairs, in the attic room, a seamstress from Lyon has been living for three winters. She is consumptive, about twenty-five, and my landlady intended to evict her for unpaid rent at the beginning of the month. I paid her rent through the summer, through my landlady, and instructed her not to say who had paid it. Nobody asked me to do this, I was under no obligation, and as I counted out the money I felt nothing, neither pity nor pleasure. My hand apparently remembers what remains of Korennaya better than I do. Chapter Three has a place for this: salt can be righteous too.

That evening another thought occurred to me. If the one within me is evil, as Father N. would say, I should be unable to do good in Her presence. Yet I paid for the seamstress and encountered not the slightest resistance, either in my hand or anywhere deeper. A theologian, of course, would reply that the Devil readily permits good deeds when they encourage pride, that Satan, according to the

Apostle, transforms himself into an angel of light, and that my assistance may yet serve an evil purpose, either for me or for the seamstress. I have nothing to be proud of, however. But if every good deed of mine can be charged to evil, while bad deeds are charged to it in any case, there is nothing left to argue about. R. would say that such theology takes no risks.

The seamstress, incidentally, is not bad-looking.

### *Menton, May 1906*

In April Pierre Curie was killed beneath the wheels of a heavy wagon on Rue Dauphine in Paris. It was raining; he slipped while crossing the street and fell in front of the horses. R. writes that shortly before his death Curie told acquaintances that at the séances of Eusapia Palladino, which he attended with Richet and sometimes with his wife, he had seen things he could not explain and believed the phenomena to be genuine. The man who measured the radiation of radium sat in the darkness beside a Neapolitan peasant woman and recorded the rising of a table, and died because he slipped on the pavement.

From everything written about the séances of Palladino and the others, I have drawn one conclusion. Almost all those who appear repeat something: a gesture, a favorite expression, handwriting recognized by relatives, a gait, sometimes the smell of tobacco. None says anything that the deceased would not have said in life. Such spirits are held by a remainder of salt, and held, as in Bobok, by inertia until they decay. But in Chapter Eleven of Ostia the wine merchant recalls Samuel, whom the witch of Endor summoned for Saul. The prophet rose in displeasure, asked why he had been disturbed, and told Saul something he did not wish to hear. This one answered, and therefore a will holds him, his own or another's. The difference between the two kinds of ghosts is the same as between a phonograph cylinder and a man at the telephone. In twenty years of reading about séances, I have never once encountered a Samuel.

### *Menton, July 1906*

I have been rereading Book Eleven of the Odyssey, in which Odysseus descends to the dead. Circe tells him that of all the shades Persephone has allowed Tiresias alone to retain his understanding, while the others drift about like shadows, understanding nothing. To speak, the dead must drink blood from the pit. Odysseus's own mother fails to recognize him until she drinks, whereupon she recognizes him, tells him the news from home, and goes away again. He cannot embrace her: his arms pass through her. Homer, then, knew my three outcomes, though he called them by different names. The shades that wander without understanding are scattered sheets. Blood is a continuation lent for a few minutes, and our mediums, who lend the spirits their bodies and voices, do the same thing that Odysseus does with his sacrificial ram. But Tiresias does not hold himself: Persephone has allowed him to retain his understanding, a woman, the queen of the dead, and he thinks in her house by her grace.

### *Menton, October 1906*

In Verny, in Semirechye, the disciples of the late Fyodorov have published the first volume of his Philosophy of the Common Task, and a copy was sent to me from Moscow. The parcel was delayed at customs, and the official spent a long time leafing through the book, asking whether this "philosophy of the common task" was some form of anarchism. I told him it concerned the resurrection of the dead, and he let it through, deciding that I was joking.

Fyodorov teaches that it is the duty of sons to resurrect their fathers, all the dead from the beginning of the world, and to do so through knowledge rather than prayer: to gather the scattered particles, master nature, and place science in the service of this one task. Dostoevsky, Solovyov, and Tolstoy read his manuscripts with reverence, and I understand why: it is the kindest idea I have encountered in my entire life. According to my archive, Fyodorov wants sons to become the

holders of their fathers[93], the whole human race to become the holder of all the dead. It is the same ancestor worship practiced by the Chinese, only with chemistry in place of incense. I have two objections.

The first is medical. If the sheets have scattered, they might still be gathered again into the same sequence, but who will hold what has been assembled? If nobody does, the result will be a ghost on a phonograph cylinder, repeating what it knew and answering nothing. If there is a holder, resurrection is unnecessary, since he already has the file.

The second objection comes from ordinary life. Resurrected fathers, from what I know of people, will first remember who owes what to whom, and Cain will rise from the earth beside Abel, and all the wars fought by our grandfathers will begin again, only with more participants, because the great-grandfathers will have joined them. Fyodorov thinks sons love their fathers. Evidently he had little experience of disputes over inheritances.

They say Fyodorov worked as a librarian at the Rumyantsev Museum, gave away his entire salary, slept on a chest with books beneath his head, and refused to allow his writings to be published under his name.

*Later*. Above his resurrected fathers, if they can be assembled, will stand a librarian with a catalog. I would not wish to be resurrected according to a catalog.

[93] Orpheus tried to do the same thing by singing. They even let him go with Eurydice and told him not to look back. He looked back because he wanted to make sure she was following him. Then they tore him apart. His head floated down the river and went on singing, while he went back down to her as a shade. It's hard to say where Orpheus ended up.

### *Menton, November 1906*

The general's wife arrived for the winter with three trunks, two maids, and a pug, and on the very first evening arranged a reading aloud of an English book by Besant and Leadbeater, Thought-Forms, complete with colored illustrations. In these, anger shoots out of a person as red lightning, jealousy hangs in the air as a green blot, and a pious thought rises as a small blue cloud. The pictures are ridiculous, but the idea beneath them is more serious than it appears. A thought-form lives as long as the one who produced it continues to feed it, and does only what it was sent out to do. It has no name of its own and is held by another's will. If there are many such thoughts and many people produce them, the result is what Parisian occultists call an egregore. In the Instruction on Contagion, the wine merchant asked whether a spirit lives in a dancing crowd and left two answers, both unresolved. I think both are true: the spirit exists as long as all the dancers hold it, and it ceases to exist if they all go home one evening.

### *Menton, March 1907*

The captain died in Toulon in February, of a stroke. The letter from his niece arrived late, and I would not have gone to the funeral in any case. He bequeathed his clippings to me, an entire trunkful. I went through them in an evening, threw nearly all of them away, and kept three over which we had laughed together. I felt neither grief nor pity, only curiosity as to whether he would come, as the deceased in his clippings come, to repeat his own stories. A month has passed. He has not come.

### *Badenweiler, June 1907*

There is a story in Acts at which I laughed even as a schoolboy. The seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, went about Ephesus casting out demons in the name of Jesus whom Paul preached. The evil spirit answered them: "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?"

Then the possessed man attacked them and beat them so badly that they fled the house naked and wounded. I no longer find it amusing. The spirit recognizes the name and recognizes the man entitled to pronounce it, but does not recognize those who have taken the name without authority. The name works only in the hands of one whom its owner holds. Lawyers call this jurisdiction. A policeman's orders are obeyed within his precinct, but beyond its boundary he is an ordinary passerby like everyone else.

*Three days later.* In On the Mysteries, Iamblichus replies to Porphyry, who was outraged that Egyptian priests threatened the gods. They threaten, says Iamblichus, lesser spirits rather than gods, and do so without acting on their own authority, but as though from the rank of the gods, clothed in their dignity; the gods themselves must not be threatened. The Testament of Solomon, published in Greek by a German scholar some seventy years ago, is arranged in much the same way. The king questions demons one after another, each giving its name and the name of the angel who subdues it, while Solomon holds them by a ring bearing a seal given to him from above, and makes them build the Temple. Goetia, as far as I now understand it, is supervision on another's farm: the conjurer arrives with a document from the owner and gives orders to the workers as long as he has the document with him.

From this I derive a rule. Whoever can be compelled is held by someone else, and the one who compels him merely makes use of another's holding. A free being cannot be compelled, only asked, and is free not to answer. In the Greek magical papyri published by Wessely, the magician threatens the gods themselves, saying he will destroy their heaven and reveal their secret names, and evidently believes that a god is defined by his name, as a patient is defined by his ward number. Iamblichus forbids threatening gods and therefore regards them as free. The war of curses I witnessed was conducted according to the same rules: Boullan defended himself with angels and the Mother of God, Guaita with his Rosicrucians. Each was certain

that his holder was stronger, but both died natural deaths, and the opposing side attributed each death to the other.

### *Badenweiler, August 1907*

There was a thunderstorm last night the like of which nobody here remembers. Lightning struck the old chestnut tree near the Kursaal, and in the morning the visitors went to look at it as though it were an executed criminal. Waite, an Englishman, has examined the known grimoires in The Book of Black Magic and of Pacts and copied out their formulas for contracts with spirits. The spirit gives what is requested, the payment is usually the soul, the term is specified, and the signature is sometimes in blood. Reading these is as dull as reading notarial deeds, and in that dullness, I think, lies the whole honesty of the pact: the price is stated. Theophilus in the wine merchant's account surrendered his soul in exchange for a written undertaking and recovered his office; Faust received twenty-four years. The farmer in the fifteenth chapter of John names no price: how much will be harvested from the branch and for how long the harvesting will continue are not stated in the parable, while I wrote down five years ago what happens to the withered ones. It follows that a pact is the only honest transaction with a holder, one in which a man knows what will be taken from him.

At the Salpêtrière we used to pass around a photograph of the contract supposedly concluded by Grandier, the priest of Loudun. At the bottom were the signatures of demons, Asmodeus and the others, in Latin, written from right to left. Grandier was burned for this contract, and even under torture he never acknowledged it as his own. The demons signed it, but he did not.

### *Badenweiler, January 1908*

I am spending this winter here. The snow is knee-deep, people go to the post office by sleigh, and Dr. Sch. insists that the dry frost is better

for me than the damp of Menton. Mauss and Hubert, two young Parisian sociologists of Durkheim's school, have published an essay toward a general theory of magic in L'Année sociologique, and R. has sent me an offprint. Magic, they say, is a social affair: people believe in the sorcerer because that is the custom, his power is what the village recognizes in him, and without the common belief all his rituals are worthless. The Instruction on Contagion says the same: belief, if it comes at all, comes after the deed.

They go on to examine the laws of sympathy, which the Englishman Frazer reduced to two: like acts upon like, and a part acts upon the whole with which it was once in contact. In 1889 I copied from Tylor that among savages a name is part of a person, like hair or nails, and laughed at it as a savage superstition. Now I see a question in it. For a nail clipping to have any effect upon a person, the nail and the person must remain within a common medium even after the scissors have separated them. This means that the deposits left by different people do not lie apart from one another but communicate, and the files about which I have written so much are not as tightly closed as I supposed. Mauss and Hubert call this medium society. The wine merchant would call it the salt of the world, the crust of Chapter One upon which we all stand and in which everything done before us has settled. Tiamat has nothing to do with it: nothing lies within her; she precedes all salt.

Contact is therefore stronger than similarity. A nail clipping is a piece of another person's salt, while a wax doll is a piece of my own, fashioned in another's likeness, and through the doll I act first of all upon myself. At the Salpêtrière I saw women who spent years sticking needles into portraits of unfaithful husbands: the husbands lived quite comfortably, while the women themselves grew thin and could not sleep.

*February 11*. The tenth has passed. I climbed to the castle ruins, stopping twice.

### *Badenweiler, March 1908*

Today I assembled a Rule of my own from the three Rules of Ostia and my own notes. The wine merchant wrote his Rules in such a way that one instruction cancels another: in the First he commands us not to destroy what we wish to escape, while in the Second he tells us to break the jug if we find ourselves reaching for it. In one place he forbids vows, in another he permits a vow to be made and kept. For a long time I regarded this as the carelessness of a sick man, but now I understand how they can be reconciled: each instruction is true at its own stage, and one need only know which stage one occupies.

*The Rule Composed at Badenweiler*

Defense is stronger than attack: to attack, one needs power over another; to defend oneself, one's own holder is enough.

Similarity acts upon the one who produces it; contact upon the one whose deposit has been taken.

Do not compel one who can refuse to answer. Whoever can be compelled already belongs to someone.

Before any bargain, ask the price. If no price is named, you are on another's farm.

Test every holding by the harvest: what is taken from you, and whether your ability to hold yourself grows from year to year.

Consent may be free, coerced, or obtained by deception, and only the first leaves no debt.

At the first stage, do not destroy what you are leaving behind; at the second, if you find yourself reaching for it, break it.

Make no vows for life. Make a vow for a fixed term if you know who can release you from it.

Do not be ashamed of a name received from a holder; do not speak your own aloud.

Answer a conjurer who comes bearing another's document as you would answer a passerby beyond the boundary of his precinct.

Do not burn the Rules until you have tested them.

### *Badenweiler, May 1908*

*May 3*. In The Alphabet of Ben Sira, a Jewish book of the Middle Ages, there is a story that Ostia mentions in a single sentence in Chapter Two. Lilith was created from the same earth as Adam and refused to lie beneath him: why should I be below you, if we were both made from dust? Adam insisted, and she pronounced the unutterable Name and flew away. God sent three angels after her, Senoy, Sansenoy, and Semangelof, and they found her by the sea and threatened to drown her, but could not bring her back. It ended with an oath: wherever Lilith saw their names upon an amulet, she would not touch an infant. Only this oath, given of her own accord, holds her, and nothing else: neither the angels, nor the sea, nor God, whose name she knows and pronounces.

*May 5*. On Walpurgis Night Mephistopheles points her out to Faust: that is Lilith, Adam's first wife; beware her hair, for whoever she entangles in it will not soon be free. Goethe, faithful to his century, holds her by the hair.

*May 8*. In Rossetti's sonnet she sits before a mirror combing her golden hair, and the sonnet ends with a young man departing from her, one of her hairs wound around his heart. Hair again. Remy de Gourmont wrote a play about her which I did not finish.

*May 12*. In a novel by MacDonald, the Scottish preacher, Lilith holds in her fist what she has taken from the world and can be saved only by opening her hand, but she cannot open it. In the end her hand is cut off with a sword, and she falls asleep in the house of death with the others, awaiting morning. The angels of Ben Sira could not bring Her back, but the Scottish pastor brought Her back under another's hold by cutting off Her hand. I found this scene harder to read than anything else I have read about Lilith.

*May 13.* Satan, awakening in hell in Milton, says that the mind is its own place and can make a heaven of hell and a hell of heaven. To condemn him, Milton gave him the finest line in the poem. The Lilith of Ben Sira could have said the same thing, only more briefly.

*May 14.* In Goethe and Rossetti, Lilith holds by means of her hair, and neither seems to have noticed that he chose the saltiest thing in the human body. Hair is dead matter and yet it grows, and it retains what a person ate, drank, and was poisoned with: by Marsh's test the toxicologists find arsenic in a lock of hair long after it can no longer be detected in the body. One can read the past in hair as one can hear the voice of a singer who has long since left the hall on a gramophone record. The poets hold Her by salt without knowing it.

If She who comes to me is Lilith, then only Her own oath holds Her, and it follows that She is not the one holding me. Perhaps She merely extends a hand, and I am the one holding on to it. This must be tested.

### *Badenweiler, June 1908*

My days here resemble one another so closely that I know the date only from the newspaper. I rise around ten, drink milk brought still warm from a mountain farm, and walk slowly through the park to the Roman baths and back, exchanging greetings with the same faces as yesterday. At four the orchestra plays in the Kursaal, always the same waltzes, and the Germans listen with such attention that one would think they were expecting the waltz to end differently today. On Tuesdays Dr. Sch. listens to my chest, grunts, and writes something in a notebook he does not show me. At the table d'hôte this year I sit beside a grammar-school teacher from Karlsruhe, also consumptive, who reports to me each evening how many times he coughed that day and keeps a special notebook with columns for the figures. I advised him to add a column for good days. He did, and is now distressed that it remains empty, which improves my spirits. There are fewer Russians since 1905, and those who do come speak so loudly about the Duma that the Germans move to other tables.

I read at night, as before. My companion is still with me, and on certain nights I hear Her reading over my shoulder.

### *Munich, July 1908*

I allowed myself a journey and spent ten hours being shaken about in a railway carriage for the sake of a single painting. I shall confess here why: I went to look for Her face. In the Neue Pinakothek hangs von Stuck's Sin: a dark-haired woman looks out from the darkness, her white body encircled by an enormous serpent, its head resting on her shoulder. The serpent's eyes shine, while the woman's remain in shadow. They say that in his own villa Stuck erected a real altar for another version of the painting. I stood before it for half an hour and came away with nothing.

That evening at the hotel I went over everything I had seen in twenty years: the serpent with a woman's torso in Michelangelo, which I know from an Alinari photograph; Collier's Lilith with a boa constrictor; Rossetti's Lilith before her mirror; the possessed women in Charcot and Richer; the saints in Grünewald; the wives in Dürer's engravings; faces on the promenade, in hospital wards, and at the table d'hôte. The wine merchant writes in Chapter Eight that one who has reached the red work sometimes recognizes on church portals the face of the serpent tempting Eve. I remembered the portal of Notre-Dame, past which I walked every Sunday, but the face there is different.

According to Flournoy, Janet, and everything I was taught, a vision is assembled from things already seen, as a mosaic is assembled from little stones, and the more a man has seen, the easier it is to discover where each stone came from. I have seen much. There is not a single stone in Her that I can identify.

### *Badenweiler, September 1908*

Before giving Her a name taken from other people's books, I decided to test the matter by distinguishing marks, as I once tested Ribot's rule, and spent the night over it.

The holders I have written about issue commands and name the punishment. In eighteen years She has spoken one sentence to me, in November 1890: take nothing from German hands. She threatened nothing. I could have taken it or refused, and nobody would have called me to account. That is advice, and cannot be called a commandment.

The God of Scripture commands: be holy, for I am holy, and demands resemblance in content, so that my actions shall be His actions. She has demanded nothing of the kind from me, yet over the years I have become like Her, though not in what I do: I have come to love night and rain, ceased fearing death, and in recent years have conducted myself as though I held myself. If there is resemblance here, it is resemblance of form, and that form is holding oneself. What I do while holding myself is probably of no concern to Her.

The most important distinguishing mark is what happens if one leaves. The Lilith of Ben Sira is defined by her departure and cannot hold anyone against his departure. In spring, after Easter night, I deliberately stopped thinking about Her for a week, did not open Ostia, and wrote nothing here. Nothing happened: no dream, no laughter, no shove in the back. On the eighth night She came as She always had, without reproach, as though I had never gone away.

Whether my dependence or my ability to hold myself grows from year to year, I cannot say. I now allow myself more morphine than I did in 1903, but less than another man in my position would allow himself, and I no longer fear death, whereas formerly I did. I record both facts.

I do not know what is being taken from me. If there is a harvest, I cannot see it.

### *Menton, January 1909*

In Chapter Two the wine merchant begins to say "we": we who speak from there do not know your name, nor do we ask. In the Instruction on the Secret Arts, darkness comes to him by the Rhine, stands beside him, and enters him, and he knows Her. In Figure Eight, concerning forbidden books: what was missing from them, She supplied for him. For twenty years I read these three passages separately, as three different things: a rhetorical figure, a hysterical attack, and a turn of phrase. Put them together and they reveal a single will: she who came to him by the Rhine supplied what the books lacked and speaks in Chapter Two through his hand. In that case Ostia is Her letter, and the wine merchant was the first to answer it.

Last night I asked myself, silently, without speaking or writing it down, what Her name was, and opened the manuscript copy at random. It opened at Chapter Eight, above which stand the words: "Why dost thou ask my name?" In the morning I examined the spine. It is broken at that point, and the manuscript opens there because I have read that passage more often than any other.

*February*. Aloud, for the first time in all these years, I asked Her to show me the ninth sheet.

### *Menton, March 1909*

I am writing at dawn, before I forget a single stroke.

I dreamed of a sheet I have never seen, the ninth of those that were burned, and dreamed it so clearly that I examined it as I would have examined it in Basel with Dr. F., moving my finger above the paper. A woodcut, not a copper engraving: broad, cutting lines, the sky above entirely black, as in the work of the Rhine masters of the early sixteenth century when they spared no wood on the block. On waking I could have named the school, though not the master.

On the right was a bare slope, with an empty stone throne at its summit, overgrown with grass, and a serpent coiled around one of

its legs. On the left, below, was the sea, flat, drawn in a few slanting lines, extending without end beyond the edge of the sheet. In the foreground stood a woman, seen from behind, in a plain long dress, her hair loose and an iron key hanging from her belt. She had raised her right hand and was pointing toward a star, bright and low above the horizon, with a slender waning crescent beside it.

I have explanations for all this, and good ones. I know Figure Nine by heart: a throne at the edge of the earth, nobody seated upon it, a woman silently pointing toward the place where the road disappears. I myself inferred the water below as early as 1895, from Tiamat. The key at her belt was suggested by Figure Seven, where she removes the key from the wine merchant's neck. All this lay in my memory, and the dream assembled it in the way dreams do.

There is no star in the text. The wine merchant's woman looks downward, into a darkness in which one cannot see one's own hand, and not a word is said about a star or a crescent. On the sheet she points upward.

*In the evening.* In Nice, at a shop on Rue Masséna, I bought a Marseille tarot deck, the kind Papus interprets in his book on the Tarot of the Bohemians, and today I shuffled it and drew a card at random for the first time in my life. It was the Moon: two dogs howl at a moon with a face, a road runs between them toward two towers, and below, a crayfish emerges from the water. Papus writes that the Moon signifies secret enemies, deception, and danger in darkness. No better interpretation of my dream could be invented: the deck frankly announces that it knows nothing itself and that everything seen may prove deceptive. The crescent on my sheet was waning, whereas on the card, judging by the face, the moon is full.

The card bears the number eighteen, and I naturally began at once to recall where I had encountered that number in the wine merchant's work. The Dominicans cast eighteen demons out of the dyer's wife near Trier, whom he describes in Chapter Two, and each demon gave

its name as it departed. There are nine Instructions in Ostia and nine Figures, making eighteen together. In Paris, numerology was practiced by the same gentlemen who summoned spirits in Batignolles, and I laughed at it. Nevertheless, I record the count.

### *Menton, October 1909*

R. sent me two books by Flammarion, an old one and a new one, and wrote that since I had taken up ghosts, I ought to know the astronomer as well. In L'Inconnu, Flammarion published the results of a survey. Ten years earlier he had asked readers of several newspapers to report whether they had ever seen or sensed a dying person at the very moment when that person was dying far away, and had received thousands of letters. A mother sees her son in the kitchen doorway at the hour when he is drowning off Madagascar; a wife hears her husband call her name three times, and a telegram arrives the next morning; a brother awakens because someone has sat down upon his legs. Flammarion compares the times, demands witnesses, and discards everything he cannot verify, and enough remains that it cannot simply be dismissed.

What matters most to me in these letters is something Flammarion does not note. The dying appear once, at the very moment of death, usually in silence, and never come again. The ghosts at séances repeat the same things for years; Samuel answered when he was summoned; these do neither. It seems that they are seen at the moment when the shelf collapses and the file passes from hand to hand, to a holder or into scattering. And those who see them are people whose salt has lain beside the salt of the dying person for many years: a mother, a wife, a brother, someone with whom a pood of salt has been eaten. The event passes through their common salt, as a jolt passes through a bundle when one file is taken from the shelf.

*Later*. The second book is an old one, L'Atmosphère, and contains an engraving which I believe I have seen before, perhaps in a shopwindow on the quay some twenty years ago. A traveler in a long

cloak has reached the place where heaven meets earth, knelt down, put his head through the vault of heaven, and is looking at what lies beyond: wheels, fiery circles, the mechanism upon which the world rests. The caption presents it as an illustration from a medieval book, but the linework belongs to our century, and it was cut, I suspect, by a Parisian craftsman instructed to work in an antique style. In the wine merchant's account, Simeon stands upon a pillar, and they keep building it higher, so that had he lived long enough, he would have been pressed against the firmament. Flammarion's traveler has reached the firmament and crawled through it. On my ninth sheet the woman stands at the edge of the earth and points beyond it, toward a star.

If I saw this engraving in 1888, the edge of the earth in my dream may have come from it. The stars beyond Flammarion's vault are scattered across the entire sky like sand. There is no single star low above the water, with a waning crescent beside it.

Over the summer my landlady had an electric light bulb installed in the corridor, and now she switches it off behind me every evening so that it will not burn unnecessarily.

### *Menton, early November 1909*

Old L., a Warsaw Jew who has been taking treatment here for three winters and with whom I sometimes play chess, has a seriously ill grandson. Last week the boy was in such a poor condition that they gave him a second name at the synagogue in Nice: Chaim, meaning "life." The old man explained that this has been done since ancient times: a sentence is written against a name, and if the name is changed, the one who comes to execute the sentence cannot find the person against whom it was written. The boy, however, had already begun to improve before the visit to the synagogue, when his fever was brought down, but I did not tell the old man that.

He also showed me the source of the custom in a German translation of the Talmud which he carries with him. The tractate on the New

Year says that four things can tear up the decree against a person: charity, crying out, a change of name, and a change of deeds; some add a change of place. Sarah is given as an example of changing a name: God commanded Abraham to call his wife Sarah instead of Sarai, as before, and immediately blessed her, and the barren woman bore a child. The wine merchant recalls the same Sarah in Chapter One, whose name was changed by a single letter, and sees a seal in it.

For my archive this is more important than it appears. According to the Talmud, the decree is addressed to a name, and therefore can be averted by changing the address. The judge, whoever he may be, finds the file by the inscription on its cover, and this agrees with what I wrote in 1902: a name contains none of the content of the actions; it merely gathers them beneath itself. A change of deeds is another path: it changes the entries themselves, and the Talmud places both paths side by side without confusing them.

The question remains of who holds the new cover. Sarah's name was changed by the same one who held the former name; the holder remained the same, only the label changed. The old man's grandson was given his name at the synagogue, and I do not know who holds him now. Nor, I suspect, does the old man, but he plays chess with greater peace of mind.

That evening I spent a long time trying to remember under whose name my February 10 was entered.

### *Menton, November 1909*

Rereading this notebook from the beginning, I noticed that in twenty-one years I have never once written my own name in it. In the introductory entry I explained this by saying that nobody but myself would ever read it.

The wine merchant writes that the Name cannot be communicated even to someone one loves, nor spoken aloud to oneself, and for twenty years I understood this as a prohibition against speaking. Now

another question concerns me: is there a Name at all for someone who has never pronounced it, or does self-holding dispense with any name and hold itself as the serpent holds its tail, without inscribing anything upon it?

If so, no cover is needed for the file, and one who holds himself does so without an inscription, while the inscription is needed only by a holder, so that he can find the file among the others. If, however, nothing can be held without a name, then namelessness itself is departure, and the Lilith of Ben Sira did not pronounce the Name for nothing when she flew away: without it she would have had nothing upon which to make her departure.

Then comes the question I have been unable to escape since 1895. One may depart into the sea before every name, where nothing has been named and everything is dissolved. Is this a fourth outcome, in which what has dissolved may yet precipitate again as something different, or the same scattering of sheets, only given a beautiful Babylonian name? The Eastern sages whom the wine merchant mentions in Chapter Ten extinguish themselves like lamps and know what they are choosing. I do not know.

### *Menton, January 1910*

Old L. has returned and brought a photograph of his grandson. The boy is alive, has grown taller, and is said to be the best pupil in his cheder. The old man is convinced that the new name saved him, and now plays chess with great enthusiasm. I went back to my room and tried to write down what I would have said if the boy had died. It came easily: the decree was written against the deed rather than the name, or the new name was given to the wrong holder. R. was right eight years ago: whatever happens, my archive will find a place for it.

*February 11.* The tenth has passed. The newspapers report that in May the Earth will pass through the tail of Halley's Comet, and according to R., Paris is already selling comet pills and masks against

poisonous gases. My landlady asked whether I intended to buy one. I replied that it is not the air that holds me.

### *Badenweiler, April 1910*

I now examine every rite as I once examined an attack at the clinic: who acts, in whose name, on whose farm, by what means, and what is paid for it. The easiest way to demonstrate this is with the rite performed upon me when I understood nothing.

An infant is immersed three times in water, and here the water is the same as in Chapter Nine of Ostia and among the Babylonians: the former person is dissolved in it, and Paul has good reason to say that those who are baptized are buried with Christ. Before this, Satan is renounced on the infant's behalf, and the godparent does so because the infant cannot give consent himself. The consent is therefore given in absentia, and the debt falls upon one who has promised nothing.

The name is chosen from the calendar of saints, that is, from another person's list, and together with the name the child receives a holder, the saint on whose day he was born. Then comes chrismation: the priest marks the forehead and says, "The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit," and this is the very seal upon the infant's forehead of which the wine merchant writes in Chapter Two.

Nobody names the price. Payment is taken throughout life, through the commandments, and for this alone I regard baptism as the most honest rite known to me[94]: the holder is named, the water is real, and the seal is placed openly.

*A few days later*. An incident from my childhood. When I was about seven, I had a fever, and my nanny, without telling my mother, took

[94] The Testimony of Truth says the opposite about baptism. People accept it in the hope of salvation and call it a seal, unaware that this is where the fathers of the world appear. The rite is only half honest. The water is real and the seal is visible. The one baptized has no idea who's doing the holding. The author reserves a different seal for himself, known only to the one who is sealed.

me to a folk healer in the settlement. The woman whispered over a dipper of water, invoking Panteleimon the Healer, gave it to me to drink, and took a dozen eggs from my nanny in payment. The fever passed two days later, as it would have done without her.

According to my analysis, the healer acted in the saint's name rather than her own, that is, with a document from the holder, and by means of the water I drank, which is contact, the strongest method. The price was stated, a dozen eggs, and paid in full. None of my professors charged so little or explained so clearly in whose name he was treating a patient.

Another incident. A maid at our boardinghouse, a Provençal woman, confessed to my landlady, who in turn told me, that ten years ago, when her fiancé had grown cold toward her, she put the ashes of her own hair into his coffee, and within a month he proposed marriage. They live quietly, by all accounts, and her husband still knows nothing of it.

Everything here was done correctly from the standpoint of sorcery: another person's salt, her own, entered him, and this is contact. Only one thing was wrong: the consent. It was obtained by deception, and according to my Rule such consent leaves a debt. Who will collect it, I do not know, but looking at her, I think she pays it herself, every day.

In childhood, when passing a ravine at night, we used to say *chur menya* and fear nothing. Afanasyev writes that Chur is an ancient ancestor, the guardian of boundaries, and that by pronouncing his name a man places himself under the protection of his forefather at the point where his own land ends. Defense, as I wrote in my Rule, is stronger than attack: it is enough to call upon one's own holder at one's own boundary, and the stranger can do nothing, for to attack he would have to cross into another's precinct.

# PART VI

### *Badenweiler, July 1910*

Today, looking down at the Rhine from the mountain, I realized that I want to leave the world, and was surprised myself at how calmly I could write it. I am not thinking of a pistol or an excessive dose of morphine: light has made provision for such an ending in advance and assigned it a place, as a ditch is assigned its place beside a road. I am thinking of the Nota at the end of Ostia: the door, locked from within, was broken open, but the owner was nowhere to be found in the house. For twenty-two years I have read it as a report of a heretic's escape.

### *Badenweiler, September 1910*

I have tested other holders by their harvest and never once tested my own. What has been taken from me over these years? My health was taken by consumption, and consumption is not Hers. My faith departed of its own accord. She has asked for no money. The only thing that has come out of me in twenty years which would not have come without Her is this notebook. Perhaps She holds me so that I may finish it, and the twenty years beyond my prognosis have been allotted to me for the work, as daylight is allotted to a day laborer.

On reflection, there are two kinds of farms. On one, the harvest consists of the actions of those being held, gathered once, at the end of the soul, like grain from a field that will produce nothing more. On the other, the harvest consists of output taken little by little and without end, like milk from a cow kept alive for that very purpose. From the first, the one who became his own holder before the harvest can escape; from the second, the one who ceases to give milk. If I am on the first, I must hurry. If I am on the second, I ought to stop writing. I considered both possibilities, poured myself some tea, and went on writing.

*February 11, 1911*. The tenth. Morphine every night now, half a grain. I stopped recording the amounts last autumn.

### *Badenweiler, March 1911*

I know what a morphine addict looks like from the outside: he waits for his appointed hour, comes alive after the injection, grows dull without it, and everything he does is done for the sake of the next dose. I gave up smoking in 1890, on the day of my diagnosis, and for another three years or so my hand would search my pocket for my cigarette case in the evenings, while at night I dreamed that I was lighting a cigarette, and woke feeling relief and disappointment together.

Viewed from outside, there is little difference between such a man and me with my notebook. I wait for night, come alive when She arrives, and write so that She will come again. Harvest and dependence are indistinguishable from outside, and a physician sees this better than anyone, having observed dependence every day. The skeptic in me says that the entire affair with my visitor is morphine taken long before I began taking morphine. Another voice answers that the morphine began in 1903, whereas She came in 1890. They speak at once, and I cannot decide which to believe: I myself am speaking in both voices.

### *Badenweiler, May 1911*

I am fifty-one years old, and all this time someone else has held my file: in childhood my mother and nanny, then the gymnasium, faith, the medical faculty, Charcot, and now, perhaps, She. If I hold myself at all, I have done so only recently, since that night in 1904 when my fear departed. And the question that troubles me is this: can an action performed today take charge of everything that came before it, claim retrospectively fifty years that were held by salt? The wine merchant writes in Chapter Seven that a man of fifty sometimes speaks of himself at thirty as of a stranger, and speaks the truth, but if a Name has been born, he can no longer say that. It follows that a newborn Name draws the entire sequence back after it, as a fishing net draws from the water

everything caught in it, both what was chosen and what came by chance.

At the Salpêtrière we had a patient who had been exhibited to students for twenty years, and she told her own history in the terms in which others had recorded it before her: "heredity on the mother's side," "hysterical constitution," "the Lord punished me for pride." She had heard the first from the interns, the second from the professor, and the third from her mother and confessor. This was easy to recognize because she even placed the stresses in the words as they did. One day, while I was there, she told the same story differently, in plain language and with details none of us had heard before. From that day onward she spoke of her mother, her illness, and everything that had happened to her without her consent as her own life, and there were no more borrowed words in her account.

There are, then, three ways of leaving the world, distinguished by who it is that leaves. One may leave as oneself, claiming the entire sequence, as a newborn Name claims it. One may leave as the person She holds, in which case it is Her file that leaves. Or one may leave as nobody, into the sea where nothing has been named, and then the question of who has left loses its meaning. Which of the three is open to me, I do not know, and I am not certain that I shall be the one to choose.

Rereading my entry from 1890 about Korennaya, I found an error in it that I had failed to notice for twenty years. Theophan translated Symeon's Discourses when I was already living in Paris. Father N. gave me the book in the autumn of 1890, a few weeks before that night, and I could not have read it as a student. Memory took a page I had read at thirty and pasted it into an evening when I was nineteen, fitting it so neatly that I wrote it down in my own hand without stumbling over it once. The astrologer in Chapter Six did the same thing with his horoscope that I had done with my own youth.

## *Badenweiler, June 1911*

At Florian's in Venice, R. said something else to me which I did not record at the time because I did not know how to answer. If an act follows neither from a cause, nor from a rule, nor from character, he said, then it is a throw of the dice, and your freedom is no different from roulette at Monte Carlo. For seven years I have carried this objection within me. Now I see the difference, though I am not certain it is enough. Once the dice have fallen, they belong to nobody: no one claims the number that came up, and tomorrow's throw remembers nothing of yesterday's. An act, once accomplished, is taken into the sequence of the one who performed it, and from that moment he answers for it, just as patient T. began to answer for her life when she told it in her own words. Chance belongs to nobody; an act belongs to someone. Only whose it becomes is decided after it has been done, and R., if I wrote this to him, would ask how I could prove that I am the one deciding, rather than someone else yet again.

*The following day*

There is a case my archive has not provided for. A man may give away his file of his own accord[95], without anyone compelling him, and then this will be the last thing he does on his own behalf. Mary answered the angel: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." The Church sees the highest freedom in this, while the wine merchant would probably see the final act, after which only salt remains. A monk taking a vow of obedience does the same, and so does Theophilus with his written undertaking, except that in Theophilus's case at least the price is named. If such a surrender can ever be taken back, freedom is deferred and remains intact; the wine merchant writes that captivity, too, can be reversed. If it cannot, there was only one day of freedom. This cannot be tested from within: the

[95] A Japanese teacher saw salvation in this and said that if even a good person is saved, then all the more so an evil one. What gets in the good person's way is what he did himself.

one who has surrendered will not know whether he can take it back until he tries, and by then he may no longer be the one making the attempt.

*Two days later.* I asked the local vinedresser, the same man who told me that the vine loves the knife, whether a grafted branch could be cut off and planted separately. It can be planted, he said, and it will put down roots, but those will be roots of its own. About twenty years ago an American aphid devastated the slopes here, and it feeds on precisely such roots. Now everything that is replanted here is grafted onto American rootstock. The aphid leaves it alone, and the rootstock holds the branch alive. Transplant the branch, and within a year or two the very soil in which it stands will destroy it.

Paul writes to the Romans of a wild olive branch grafted onto a good tree, and of God's power to graft the broken branches in again, but says nothing about a grafted branch departing of its own accord. Perhaps it is not the file that is surrendered. Perhaps the file is bound into another's volume, and then there is no one to return it and nothing to return: it no longer has a cover of its own. Paul said this too: "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." The sheep on the right hand in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew do not themselves know whom they served: when did we see Thee hungry? Sheep are kept for the wool shorn from them each spring, and they are shorn without being asked. I wrote in my Rule that one must never make vows for life, and failed to notice that I am now asking myself whether I should make such a vow to Her.

### *Badenweiler, July 1911*

A student from Kyiv, who had arrived after his first hemorrhage, stopped me in the park and asked whether it was true that people lived a long time with this disease. Twenty years ago I would have spoken to him for an hour, mostly about the good possibilities. Now I told him how long people lived according to our textbooks and how many of those I had known had survived that long. He thanked me and

walked away, his shoulders hunched. At dinner I noticed that I was eating with an appetite.

*The following day*

Yesterday's student reminded me of the evening when R. told me how much time I had left. Without the illness, I would probably still be reading Ostia as the history of a madman. Death can do what no preacher succeeds in doing: it forces a man to look where he has never looked before and does not allow him to postpone the examination until better times. It is rightly called an evil. It takes away everything a man intended to do and promises nothing in return. That is why it is the best tempter: once death has been seen, every promise sounds more convincing.

When a believer encounters death, he discovers the futility of the world. Everything he loved, possessed, and worked for will fall apart, and he turns toward what will never fall apart. Preachers have known this for a long time and gladly take their listeners to cemeteries. There, earthly distinctions are erased with particular clarity, and the poor man consoles himself with the thought that the rich man, too, must lie in the ground. Then he is shown heaven, where distinctions will be restored according to a different reckoning, and invited to cling to God.

If the world is futile, why could God not prove equally futile? Suppose He preserves me forever. But whose eternity will it be? If I continue only because He holds me, death will have changed nothing essential: formerly I belonged to the world, and now I shall belong to God. One can spend eternity in a prison, and eternity will not make it any less a prison. A theologian would call this blessedness, and perhaps he would be right. A prisoner content with his confinement exists perfectly well.

Everyone hears the preacher, while almost nobody hears the Devil. The first promises that you will not be abandoned. The second asks why you must necessarily have someone to hold you, and offers no

answer. Such consolation will not take one far. It is not even offered at funerals.

Death may lead a man to God, to the Devil, or nowhere at all, and there is nothing in death itself that makes a choice between the first two necessary.

### *Badenweiler, August 1911*

I was rereading Chapter Eleven and stopped at a passage I had once taken for a joke. In a hundred years people will begin interpreting the book: some will find heresy in it, others a doctrine, still others will mark in red the passages that promise freedom, assemble a Rule from its prescriptions, and begin recognizing their fellows by the way they pronounce the word "darkness." In June 1890 I laughed that the author had miscalculated by three hundred years and failed to foresee his interpreter. He was wrong only about the number. My Badenweiler Rule lies in this notebook, and I composed it exactly as he described: from the wine merchant's prescriptions, reconciling what he had deliberately left unreconciled. His Third Rule ends with the words "Burn all the rules," while mine ends by saying that Rules should not be burned until they have been tested. I wrote this without yet understanding whom I was arguing with.

The fire was burning in the fireplace. I held the sheets over the flames and put them back into the notebook. To burn a Rule because a book commands it is to carry out yet another prescription, while to preserve it out of reverence is to serve it. The wine merchant knew this when he wrote the final line.

*September*. After the downpours the Rhine is yellow and swift, carrying branches downstream. I watched it from the mountain for an hour.

### *Badenweiler, November 1911*

November is foggy here. Until noon the valley lies beneath a white covering, like a bedsheet; above the fog rises the Blauen, already covered in snow, and it seems that the little town is drifting somewhere with its Kursaal and post office. I read little during these weeks. In the evenings I sit by the window and watch the stream running down the mountain, or, when the fog clears, the moon and stars above the Vosges. Whenever the moon is waning, I catch myself searching beside it for a low, bright star, like the one on the sheet I dreamed of.

The theologians speak of nature: a man has such-and-such a nature, an angel another, and God cannot will evil. The longer I consider this, the more clearly I see that their nature is the same salt, only given a scholarly name. We expect wool and obedience from a sheep, and nothing else, and call this the nature of sheep. Yet Darwin showed that shepherds made such sheep over several thousand years by selecting the docile and woolly members of their flocks. Nature, then, comes afterward: first someone acted, then what was done settled, and afterward the settled result was called nature and used to deduce what could be expected from the sheep.[96] The wine merchant would have called nature salt mistaken for an origin.

I now understand why R. in Venice called my act a throw of the dice. When we ask what decides, if neither cause nor nature does, we have no word with which to answer except "chance," because our entire language is arranged to ask what follows from what. The wine merchant calls it the Name, and there seems to be no other name for it. The Name answers the question of who it is, but says nothing about

[96] Pascal said it long before the doctor. "Custom is a second nature that destroys the first… I fear that nature itself is only a first custom." His fear took him only so far. He never asked who set the first custom. He did make use of it. He told the unbeliever to take holy water and have Masses said as though he already believed. This "will make you believe and will stupefy you."

what follows from it. Chance answers neither question. R. would probably say that I have merely substituted one word for another. Yet he signs his letters with the letter R., though by his own reckoning he might just as well sign them with the word "chance" or "human nature."

### *Badenweiler, February 1912*

It is Fastnacht in the surrounding villages. Mummers in wooden masks go from house to house, banging on frying pans to drive out winter. Winter does not hear them.

Waite has republished his book on black magic and pacts under a new title, The Book of Ceremonial Magic, and the pacts remain the same. In thirteen years black magic has become ceremonial, as a cook becomes a housekeeper: everything in the household remains as it was, only the wages are higher. The preface has grown longer and sterner, and Waite explains that he publishes all this as a warning. The Cologne masters also made a copy of Ostia as a warning, and thanks to them I am reading it.

### *Badenweiler, October 1912*

The stoves have been lit, and the room smells of dust and last winter. The general's wife has ordered Isida, a monthly journal of occult sciences, for me from St. Petersburg, and I now receive it in the mail along with Questions of Philosophy. Our occultists translate Papus, write about magnetism, and interpret the arcana of the Tarot, all in the style of a report submitted to a provincial administration: an arcanum "has as its designated purpose," while a spirit "is to be summoned in accordance with procedure." The eighteenth arcanum, my Moon, is explained there over three pages, and I did not recognize her in any of them.

### *Badenweiler, November 1912*

The general's wife, who has taken to visiting monasteries in her old age, sent me a little book by the schemamonk Hilarion, On the Mountains of the Caucasus, a conversation between two hermits about the Jesus Prayer. She added that the book had divided the monks on Mount Athos into two parties, who were disputing so fiercely that the matter had reached the Patriarch of Constantinople. Hilarion teaches that the Lord Himself is present in the name of Jesus, and that whoever repeats this name without ceasing enters into union with the Lord Himself, who is present in the name. My mother taught me to whisper "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me" at night, and I whispered it until I fell asleep. Even now, when I cannot sleep, my lips sometimes begin of their own accord.[97] The wine merchant would have called this whisper a deposit of salt. Hilarion would reply that it is in the deposit that the Lord dwells. I find it difficult to argue with him: if the Name of God is written on the cover, then God holds the sequence.

### *Badenweiler, May 1913*

Dr. Sch. has bought an automobile and drives patients to the castle ruins in it, with such pride that one might think he had invented it himself. I took one ride and walked back. From Moscow I received Apology for Faith in the Name of God and in the Name of Jesus, by Hieroschemamonk Antony Bulatovich, the same man who had been a hussar and fought in Abyssinia, and who now defends the monks of Mount Athos against the Synod that condemned them. The book opens with an unsigned preface headed "From the Editors," written with such learning and fervor that I read it twice before turning to

[97] Repeat a prayer long enough and it starts saying itself in your heart. At first you say someone else's name in your voice. Then the name speaks in yours. Who's speaking then, the One you're calling or you?

Bulatovich himself. Its principal claim is expressed in words attributed to Father John of Kronstadt: The Name of God is God Himself.

For as long as I have kept this notebook, I have been asking who holds. If the Name of God is God Himself, then He Himself stands on the cover of the file where His name is written.[98] The one whom this Name holds is held by God and by Him alone, and between that person and God there is neither priest, nor salt, nor calendar of saints through which the name was bestowed. The Lilith of Ben Sira pronounced this Name as she flew away. She departed from God by means of God; she had no other way of leaving.

If the Name of God is God Himself, what are we to say of one who holds his own Name? Such a Name can neither be given nor taken away: the will itself gives birth to it and holds it. It follows that anyone who has accomplished this is also a god, and requires neither omnipotence nor worship to be one. Bulatovich, of course, would regard this conclusion as heresy: he speaks of the Name of the one God, while I have extended his words to anyone who has managed to name himself. But the wine merchant does not write of gods in the plural without reason.

One thing does not fit. Bulatovich says that the Name of God, pronounced in prayer, remains God Himself, whereas the wine merchant writes that every Name spoken aloud settles and becomes a sign by which one can be summoned, and that for this reason one must not speak one's own even to oneself. Perhaps both are right, each about a different thing. The Name of a holder can be pronounced: it holds those who pronounce it and loses nothing by being called upon. The Name of one who holds himself cannot be pronounced, because once spoken it becomes a handle by which others can take hold of him.

[98] There are only consonants on the cover. People forgot how to pronounce the name. Later they took the vowels from the word "Lord" and got "Jehovah." They put a name on the cover that nobody can read in their own voice.

Bulatovich writes as he once fought: charging headlong, without counting his opponents or paying much attention to his own flanks. He exchanged his hussar's uniform for a cassock, but kept his tactics.

I have not written my own name on the cover.

### *Badenweiler, June 1913*

R. sent me a little English book from Paris, The Book of Lies (Which Is Also Falsely Called BREAKS), by an Englishman named Crowley. It contains about a hundred chapters, some only a few lines long, others a single line, and on the first page even the one proposition from which the whole book is supposedly composed is declared false. The wine merchant spent a single page on this thought and moved on, while the Englishman built an entire book upon it and took up residence there. R. writes that the author is now in Paris and that people tell stories about him which R. does not dare repeat.

In Chapter Forty-Five, Crowley relates that he went to bed with Faith and awoke to find a corpse in his arms; Doubt, with whom he had drunk and danced all night, proved to be a virgin in the morning. Admirably put. The wine merchant would have placed this under the Instruction on Nothing Being True, though he would have added that the brotherhood in Antwerp which greeted its members with the words "nothing is true" had established a Rule and a treasury of its own. In another chapter Crowley commands us to doubt even our own doubt, so he evidently knows the danger.

Further on, the resemblance becomes almost indecent. He has Nothing, the destruction of the former man, death which proves to be a birth, and a Will to which no law imposed by another applies. In Chapter Twenty-Seven, a sorcerer has subjected everything that exists to his power, acquired the ability to fulfill any desire, and nevertheless remained the same person he was before. Crowley finds this regrettable, and the wine merchant would have agreed. Several times

I looked into the Latin manuscript copy to make sure I was not reading my own translation.

*Same place, several days later*

I found the difference in the chapter about a mountaineer. Crowley writes that an exercise repeated countless times begins to perform itself, until in the end it is no longer the man who acts, but a certain IT acting through him. Only then, he maintains, is the task properly performed. I know this from the clinic, though I doubt that the English magician and the Parisian intern would agree on the explanation. A man learns to walk with effort, then walks without thinking about his legs. But the fact that his legs move of themselves does not mean that they themselves decided where to go.

In another chapter Crowley explicitly declares ordinary consciousness to be an imperfection of wakefulness and proposes awakening from wakefulness itself. The IT of which he writes lies even beyond freedom and necessity. Here their paths diverge. The wine merchant also wishes to free himself from the former man, but after that man's death he must still perform an act of his own. For Crowley, the highest achievement consists in ceasing to interfere with what acts through you.

It would be unfair, however, to equate his IT with the intern. Crowley distinguishes ordinary wanting from True Will, and perhaps he needs to remove the former precisely for the sake of the latter. But how does he know that what acts through him belongs to him? He would probably reply that the question disappears together with the one who asks it. The wine merchant would ask it again.

And yet in Chapter Eighteen Crowley advises against directing another person's path: let the other go where he wishes; you are his helper, not his master. I would not dispute that. It seems he knows how to release others, while trying to bring himself to a place where the one who releases and the one who is released can no longer be distinguished.

I should like to know whether anyone holds him.[99] Judging by the book, he does not know himself, but unlike me, he regards this as a virtue.

### *Badenweiler, late June 1913*

I tried to defend Crowley against my own objection. If his IT exists before the division between I and Not-I, then there is no one to be a slave and no one to be a master. What acts through me cannot be another's, because there is no other there.

But then there are two possibilities. Either he is speaking of the unity of all that exists, of which philosophers have spoken for two thousand years. In that case master and slave also form a unity, and nothing prevents one from ruling the other. Common being does not yet mean common will. Crowley has added nothing to the old doctrine except capital letters.

Or else his IT really does lie beyond every distinction, so that nothing can be said about it. But then one cannot even say that there is no distinction within it between I and Not-I. Perhaps there is. Perhaps there is not. If the words themselves have lost their meaning there, why does Crowley regard one statement as true and another as false? The ineffable does not become one merely because plurality cannot be expressed within it.

At the clinic, when a patient reports having experienced something for which he cannot find words, we record that he was unable to describe it. We do not record that he experienced the unity of all existence. The latter would require some further evidence beyond the absence of evidence.

The Englishman has written an entire book about what cannot be expressed. In Chapter Seven the wine merchant commands silence

[99] He'll be cremated in Brighton. Someone will read his "Hymn to Pan" over the coffin, and the town council will call it a black mass and promise it will never happen again.

concerning the Name. I am beginning to understand that these are not the same thing.

### *Badenweiler, July 1913*

R. arrived with his wife for two weeks. We walked to the castle every day, slowly, and he never once spoke of my illness, for which I am grateful. He brought from St. Petersburg last year's Solitaria by Rozanov, which, he says, the censors initially confiscated. It consists of entries without beginning or end, and beneath many of them the place where they were written is noted: in a cab, while examining coins, at night. Rozanov writes about God, his wife, coins, and his pains, all together, without separating one from another. I have been writing this way since 1888. I believe I envy him: he writes out of freedom, while I write out of breathlessness.

### *Badenweiler, August 1913*

I was rereading Chapter Eleven and understood for the first time where the Basel bookman went wrong. In 1888 I read the last sentence of that passage as a boast and failed to notice that it answers the bookman's question.

I now think that the wine merchant's nine sheets were the last thing he made, whereas for the bookman they were the first thing with which he intended to begin. The wine merchant had already lived through everything he wrote about: he drank, was ruined, abandoned his home, wandered, studied, and only afterward made his sheets. The bookman purchased ready-made images and expected that by arranging them in the proper order he would obtain what their first owner had obtained. He wanted to travel another man's path without taking a step.

A good deal of occultism, I suspect, is arranged in this fashion. People draw circles according to other people's books, pronounce names they did not give, put on garments designed by the dead, and

expect the promised result to follow a correctly performed ritual. If the ritual was composed by someone who genuinely performed an act, the others merely repeat his salt. The more faithfully they repeat it, the less of their own remains in the performance. The wine merchant warned that one who breaks a commandment for the sake of breaking it serves the commandment from the reverse side. A conjurer who performs another man's ritual for the sake of freedom serves it from the front.

For that matter, another man's sheet may become the occasion for an act of one's own, as the Latin manuscript copy became for me. But then what difference does it make which sheet one begins with? The bookman asked about the order, when he should have asked himself what he wanted to do. The wine merchant could have told him this and did not.

### *Badenweiler, October 1913*

Chapter Eight says that an encounter must be tested many times, and that a Gift in its first year may become a Rule by the tenth. My encounter is twenty-three years old. If Ostia is Her letter, then this notebook is my reply, and that reply is either a Gift or a harvest taken from me. From within, I cannot distinguish the two.

### *Badenweiler, December 1913*

The frost set in last night, and the sky above the Vosges cleared to the very edge. The valley below lies flooded with fog; in the moonlight it lies as flat as water, and only the bell towers rise out of it. In the attic the beams creak with the cold. I stood at the window until my hands grew numb.

From London, through R. again, came a book by a young draftsman named Spare, The Book of Pleasure, published by the author himself, with his own drawings of naked old women and beasts, drawn in such a way that one does not forget them. He writes obscurely: his

sentences break off halfway, he takes his words wherever he finds them and invents the ones he lacks, and I read every page twice before I understood what it was about. Our patients write down their visions this way when they hurry to get them on paper before they fade, and I read Spare as I used to read their notebooks.

The principal thing in it is a method Spare calls sigils. A desire is written down in a single sentence, the repeated letters are crossed out, and the remaining letters are combined into a sign. The sign is then deliberately forgotten, and the forgotten desire fulfills itself because it is now acting from the depths. As I read, I saw our J. with her umbrella. Spare does to himself what the intern did to her: he gives an order, conceals its reason, and waits for the action to take place as though of its own accord. Only here Spare himself serves as the intern, his former self, and holds himself by his own forgotten command. This is more honest than prayer: the one who makes the request and the holder are the same person, and he pays out of his own pocket.

There is also a state which he calls Neither-Neither. At first I understood it as though Spare wanted neither of two opposites to be true, and set him against the wine merchant, who in Chapter Three requires both answers, "I can do it" and "I can leave it undone," to be true at the same hour. On rereading, I saw that I was mistaken. Spare speaks of leaving the pair itself, for a place where the opposites no longer pull in opposite directions. The wine merchant speaks of the same point from the other end and calls it death: both answers are true, and therefore neither decides for the man any longer.

Spare also has what he calls Kia, the freedom from which everything emerges. Initially I thought that by Kia he meant himself, and had almost written that this was how it differed from my Tiamat. Then I found a passage where he does not dare call it himself. In that case it resembles both Tiamat, the unnamed sea before any name, and the wine merchant's Name, which cannot be communicated aloud even to oneself. Four hundred years later, an Englishman who had never

seen my Latin manuscript copy and had probably never heard of Mainz arrived at the same place by his own road.

### *Badenweiler, late December 1913*

I reread this year's entries and counted that I had written the word "holds" more often than "I." In my account the cook is held by her wages, the visitor to the resort by his column of good days, Nietzsche lost his holder, Lilith is held by a single oath, and I sort every new thing into files before I have even had time to look at it. The old woman's lips in our ward recited the "Our Father" of their own accord, while my hand writes "holder" of its own accord. The wine merchant warned that one's own salt is more dangerous than another's: another's seal can be seen, while one's own flatters and speaks in the voice of one's former decisions. All this time I have done the same thing with his book. In 1890 I placed it in a file labeled "Diseases of the Will," and then made a larger file and called it an archive. The second was more elegant than the first, but arranged in exactly the same way.

In the same chapter he tells of a monk who read a book and wrote objections in the margins. A hundred years later another monk mistook the marginal notes for the master's hand and the text for the pupil's errors, and obtained from the book the same instruction on freedom, only read backward. This notebook is my marginal commentary. Someday someone will mistake it for the text.

That evening I did what I had learned from Spare. I wrote my entire system in a single sentence, the one I had found in 1902: "The holder holds the name; the name holds the sequence." I crossed out the repeated letters and made a sign out of what remained. It looked something like a key with a crossbar, and I threw the sheet into the stove before I had time to remember what I had drawn.

*Morning.* My landlady brought the milk, and I did not ask myself who held my landlady.

# PART VII

### *Badenweiler, January 1914*

Snow on the Roman baths. The Romans heated water here for legionaries; now it is used to treat grammar-school teachers.

Yesterday I reread this notebook from the beginning and could not find the point where the wine merchant ends and I begin.

Ra gave Isis his name in the Turin papyrus. In Turin, Nietzsche signed his letters "Dionysus" and "The Crucified." I have only just noticed this, after twenty-five years.

From above, the entire crust is visible. From below, in the water, none of it can be seen.

R. sent me Fallen Leaves, the first box. I read one leaf a night, as I take morphine: I cannot manage more, and less has no effect.

The general's wife sent me a little icon of Seraphim of Sarov. I put it in the drawer beside my mother's. Let them hold each other.

*February 11, 1914*. The tenth has passed, for the tenth time.

### *March*

Dr. Sch. takes my temperature. I take his: thirty-six point six, a wife, and a mortgage.

I found an entry from 1890 in which I am afraid of dying, and recognized it as my own. So it is possible to claim the past as one's own.

Sometimes I write "we" and notice it only the next day.

### *April*

Last night She sat by the window and looked out at the Rhine. In the morning I remembered that the window faces the courtyard.

My landlady says I have lost weight. I tell her I am lightening my load for the journey.

Tiamat does not call. She is simply below.

### *Badenweiler, May 1914*

From here one can see clearly how they hold one another: the wife holds the husband, the husband his office, the office the sovereign, the sovereign God. It resembles a circle dance in which no one is allowed to let go of anyone's hands.

My landlady brings me broth and crosses herself at the door. She is right, only too late.

I dreamed that I was reading my own manuscript and did not recognize the handwriting. When I awoke, I recognized it, and that was worse.

Maeterlinck asks whether our "I" will survive beyond the grave. He asks as though the "I" were lying in a coat pocket and could be forgotten at a hotel.

Dr. Sch. examined my chest and said that I was living in defiance of medicine. I replied that medicine had nothing to do with it, and we both smiled, each at his own meaning.

For twenty-five years I have asked who holds me. Not once have I asked whether I want to be released.

We who speak from there are in no hurry. Finish your broth.

### *Badenweiler, July 1914*

The heir to the Austrian throne has been assassinated in Sarajevo. The Germans at the table d'hôte say there will be no war, and say it so loudly that it is clear there will be one.

For the first time in six years, the teacher from Karlsruhe entered a day in his column for good days. On the twenty-eighth he did not cough: he was occupied with the newspapers.

### *August 1*

Germany has declared war on Russia. In the morning I was a visitor to the resort; by lunchtime I had become a subject of an enemy power. My illness had not changed its allegiance.

My landlady wept and feared that I would be arrested in her house. I think she was afraid for the house.

A gendarme came with a document. Russians fit for military service are being detained. He looked at me, crossed something out, apparently me, and left.

At the station in Müllheim, a crowd saw the reservists off with flowers and singing, and I felt at ease. The circle dance in which nobody may release anyone's hands has been drawn so tight this time that perhaps it will break.

Dr. Sch. wrote in his certificate that I was ill, harmless, and could be released. Harmless? Who knows.

Yesterday the teacher from Karlsruhe was still showing me his column of good days, and today he moved to another table at the table d'hôte. Neither of us has done anything to the other. The wine merchant wrote of dancing in the Rhine towns, where a man who stood beside the dancers would be dancing himself an hour later, without arguing with anyone. Now I see it: everyone is dancing, and tomorrow the newspapers will explain what they are dancing for.

All these years they called me der russische Doktor here. Now they call me der Russe.

### *Basel, August 1914*

The train took half a day instead of an hour. The railway station in Basel is German and stands on Swiss soil, so I crossed the border without leaving the station, somewhere between the buffet and the baggage office.

The hotel is the same, beside the Rhine, and so is the window. The water still flows toward Mainz, only now through a war.

All my luggage consists of the notebooks, the manuscript copy of Ostia, and a box containing two little icons. I left everything else with my landlady in payment of my debt.

There will be no more money from Moscow. R. promises to send it from Paris through Geneva.

### *Basel, September 1914*

I went to see Holbein. He is still waiting to open his eye the rest of the way. I have stopped waiting.

In the newspapers all sides pray for victory, and each expects God to grant it.

The Flood, it turns out, has not ended. Now it is moving over dry land, and everyone insists that the waters have risen to purify.

When a soldier kills on command, he serves the sovereign. When he refuses, he is asked what rule he followed in refusing. Even disobedience is something they try to enter into a Rule.

Satan is called the Prince of This World. Hers is a strange principality: everything here is arranged after the pattern of the promised Kingdom, everyone serves the good, only different masters determine what shall be called good. The Devil, if the book is to be believed, needs people capable of answering for themselves. In the present world there is scarcely any work left for Her.

Ivan Karamazov returned his ticket because the tear of a tortured child was worth more than all the harmony of the world. The world reasoned otherwise: since a tear is priceless, it is worth mining like a diamond, and it has always mined it, sawing prophets and robbers in two and flaying apostles and prisoners alive. The operation has been expanded to an industrial scale.

In 1888 I diagnosed the wine merchant with moral insanity, adding that I wanted to agree with the diagnosis because one can pity a sick man. I reread the entry. I do not pity myself.

### *Basel, October 1914*

There is more room around me now. My landlady no longer enters my room and sends dinner by the maid, who puts the tray on a chair

by the door and leaves before I can thank her. There are many Russians in Basel now, and all are occupied with something: some collect money for the wounded, others argue about the war in the cafés near the bridge. Once, when I said there that it made no difference to me which side won, they stopped greeting me. The young physician comes once a week instead of twice and examines my chest without taking off his gloves.

R. writes less often. His son has been at the Marne since September, and in my last letter I wrote something about a circle dance which he either failed to understand or understood too well. His reply arrived a month later, on a single sheet, with money and not a single question. In 1902 I asked myself whether I would cease to regard R. as a friend if he betrayed me, and did not wish to know the answer in advance. Now it was his turn to answer. He still sends the money regularly, however; his friendship, it seems, holds for the same reason the retired major's vow held.

### *November*

My cough has changed. I recognize it: this is how those in Menton who did not return in the spring used to cough during the winter.

In Basel morphine is dispensed only on the prescription of a Swiss physician. My physician is young and sympathetic toward Russia.

### *December*

At Christmas, according to the new calendar, the bells rang at Basel Minster. My lips said of their own accord: "Glory to God in the highest." I did not interfere.

If She holds me, She holds me without hands. If I hold myself, I too do so without hands.

### *Basel, January 1915*

I have moved from the hotel into rooms kept by a widow on the Kleinbasel bank. The window overlooks the Rhine again.

R. sent money through Geneva and, for the first time in six months, asked whether I needed anything. What I need is not to be asked. I did not write that.

The Rhine has frozen along its banks. Dark water runs through the middle, and nothing is reflected in it.

Yesterday an unfamiliar gentleman bowed to me on the bridge. I bowed back. We both seem to have mistaken each other for someone else.

I read Ostia and no longer interpret it. I am the one being interpreted.

Salt holds as long as it is kept damp.

The young Swiss physician asked whom he should write to if anything happened. I said R., in Paris. He wrote it down and asked my own name. I gave him R.'s.

### *February*

I do not ask who holds anymore.

She came during the day. She had never come during the day before.

We who speak from here do not ask your name. I wrote that. The handwriting is mine.

The wine merchant doomed the bookman by remaining silent. I leave you this notebook without regret.

*February 9.* My landlady asked what to serve for dinner tomorrow. I said something light. I do not lock the door at night.

# Nota

*Department of Inheritance Matters, Canton of Basel-Stadt. Inventory of the property of a foreign national who died in Switzerland without heirs.*

On February 12, 1915, following a report by the keeper of furnished rooms in Kleinbasel that her lodger, a Russian subject, a physician aged fifty-four, had not left his room for two days and did not answer knocks at the door, the door of his room, found unlocked, was opened in the presence of a police officer. The lodger was found dead in his bed. According to the physician summoned to the scene, the time of death could not be established; death occurred during the night of February 9–10 or February 10–11.

On the table were found a manuscript in Russian, containing occasional words in Latin and Greek, consisting of several notebooks written in the same hand, and an old Latin manuscript copy of a certain treatise, approximately sixty leaves in length. In a desk drawer were two small icons and a deck of playing cards, one card from which lay on top of the notebook. The contents of the manuscript were not examined, as the language was unknown to those present. The effects and papers were sealed and placed in custody pending the identification of heirs or the expiration of the statutory period.

*Annotation in another hand*. The papers were released on June 3, 1919, to R., Doctor of Medicine, Paris, on the basis of a written instruction from the deceased, retained by his attending physician, designating the said Dr. R. as the recipient of the manuscripts.[100]

[100] *Publisher's note.* The deceased's name in the inventory has been obliterated, apparently at a later date and in different ink. After Dr. R.'s death, his widow transferred the notebooks and the Latin manuscript copy to the library of the Russian church on Rue Daru, where they remained until the present edition.

# Rima tenebrarum:

## A Notebook on Encounter

# 0. On the Second

One said: "I am."

He repeated what he had said, and the repetition added nothing. He could repeat it forever, and he needed no one to be in agreement with himself.[101]

Then someone said to him: "You."

And there were two.[102]

*You write "someone." You could have asked who.*

*Narcissus was answered, after all. In the forest he shouted to ask whether anyone was nearby, and Echo answered: nearby. She could speak only in his words, and he ran away from her to the stream, where no one spoke.*[103]

[101] Aristotle's God thinks only of Himself, because thinking of anything else would mean depending on it. Then there's the One of the Neoplatonists: everything flows from it, and it turns toward nothing. The Quran says God has no need of the worlds. You can say "you" to a being like that. It won't add anyone on His side.

[102] In synergy, a person thinks he's discovered unity in twoness. Sergeants have known about it for ages. On the parade ground they count to two. Left, right, and the company moves as one body. The two are still two, and a third does the counting.

[103] There's Nobody walking through the desert, and there are the nameless. There are plenty of the latter, and they talk nonstop. They even believe someone goes out of their way to hate them. If someone goes out of their way to hate you, at least they noticed you.

# I. On the Crack

The vessel was full, and there was no room in it for another.[104]

It was struck, and it cracked. Its contents ran out through the crack, but the walls remained intact, so the vessel was still called a vessel.

Through the crack came something that had not been inside it before.[105]

*The vessel is the heart, of course. That is how they write in every book, and you couldn't resist either.*

The fool began breaking the other vessels, hoping to learn what was contained in each.

*Montparnasse is full of them. For freedom's sake they broke their property, their marriages, some even their heads, and now they sit in the Rotonde from morning on.*

In the morning he sat among the shards, and everything around him was open.[106]

No one came.

[104] There can be a crack in salt too. You can see the other person through it. If someone always acts as expected, all you see is their character. "I don't recognize you," people say when they see you yourself for the first time. They say it as a reproach. There's also the crack between two people. Patch it up and you're supposed to get paradise.

[105] In Japan they fill cracks with gold lacquer. It looks good, costs plenty, and nothing else gets in through the crack.

[106] In the Kabbalists' account the vessels broke in God's own hands. The light was too much for them. He's been gathering the trapped sparks from the shards ever since. The shards stay behind, and others build their homes out of them.

## II. On the Gramophone

*When they put on Chaliapin at the Gallipoli Society, the old men stand up as though he had entered. The record is worn out, the needle skips in the third verse, and he sings the same word twice.*[107] *They stand and sit down only when the needle hisses in the empty groove.*

The gatekeeper at the gate bowed to everyone who entered and said: hello.

They bowed back to him, and no one noticed that he bowed even when no one entered.

One day someone came in who did not want to return the bow, and walked past.

The gatekeeper bowed and said hello.

He could not be refused: he had asked for nothing.[108]

[107] People are quickest to see a soul in a machine when it malfunctions. Lucifer is the biggest breakdown, and God holds on to it as the best proof that He's right. In John, the devil is bound for a thousand years, then for some reason let loose again for a little while.

[108] That's what God demands of Job. Satan asks, "Doth Job fear God for nought?" Job held as long as he asked for nothing. When he started demanding an answer, God answered out of the whirlwind.

## III. On the One Who Did Not Answer

Summon one who can (*will*) come.

If he comes because he must, it will be the fulfillment of a law.[109]

If he comes for a reward, you will hear your own promise.

If he does not come, do not say that he refused you. Silence has no mouth.[110]

One day you will be summoned as you once summoned another.

Beware of answering by a rule.

[109] For two thousand years Christians have been calling someone who's coming anyway. Scripture ends with "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Why call?

[110] Mother Teresa felt no presence of God for half a century. We know from her letters. She never called it a refusal. Silence has no mouth, and darkness has a crack and a gaze. Whoever sees God's darkness isn't looking at Him.

# Sheet One

October 1944.

The Latin manuscript copy of "Ostia" and the notebooks of the doctor who translated it were given to the cathedral library before the war, and in my inventory they stand under a single number. In September the churchwarden asked me to stay away from the cathedral office for the time being, and my evenings became free.

*Your evenings had been free before, too.*

The Nota on the last page says that there were nine sheets, that they were found on the floor in three rows of three and burned with the original. The doctor knew no more about them.

The first sheet apparently stood in the second chapter, beside the serpent that did not pluck the fruit. So a tree, a serpent on the trunk, and a hand reaching for the branch of its own accord. Whose hand it is, the text does not say; I carve a woman's and keep the fingers a little farther from the apple than necessary. On the upper branch I put a raven, in the empty sky a new moon, a black circle seen only by someone who knows it is there.[111] I shall add the raven and the moon to every sheet: they are absent from the text, and let at least this be mine.[112]

*For the Church Fathers, the raven is the black soul of a sinner, or even a demon outright. Take it, since it's yours.*

Motto: Nec dedit serpens nec abstulit. The serpent neither gave nor took away.

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[111] You can't see the new moon. In ancient times they announced the new month when witnesses came and said they'd seen the first thin crescent. This is the only moon nobody can testify to.

[112] Everything here is his and none of it is his. That's the point. The raven has long meant something of its own to the Church Fathers. The board was cut from someone else's frame. Those who only repeat can't make anything their own.

The block is pearwood, from a frame the bookbinder threw away. I carve with a cobbler's knife and forget that here everything on the right will become left.

# IV. On Light

Light comes afterward.[113]

First one does, and the doer is wholly in his deed, as a singer is in a song. The Greeks called it energy.

Then it is done, and what is done can be seen, and the one who sees says: good or bad.[114] The one who did it is already standing in darkness at that moment, one step farther on.

Do not do in light what you wish to encounter.[115]

Do not put out the lamp while another is in the room.[116]

If you put it out, put out both.

*They supply electricity by the hour, from six to eight, and naturally he writes about light during those two hours, and about darkness the rest of the time. The reader can check by the handwriting what was written when. The handwriting is the same in the dark.*

[113] God said, "Let there be light: and there was light." God Himself sat in the dark.

[114] "And God saw that it was good." He judges His own work in the light and left Himself as the standard, like the kilogram at Sèvres. In time the standard itself started losing weight, and they dropped it.

[115] The Gospel tells you to shut yourself in your room and pray in secret, then promptly promises that "thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." You do it all out of public view. You know about the hidden camera, though.

[116] In an interrogation it's the other way around. They point the lamp at your face. The one who lights you up sits in divine darkness.

# V. On Salt

*Two steps from the cathedral, Madame K. summons dead husbands and sons on Thursdays, and is paid in food. Last winter a general's widow asked where her husband had hidden the money, and the husband named the place. The money was found.*[117] *At the police station Madame K. spent a long time explaining that she knew nothing about the money, and asked them to summon the deceased as a witness.*

*He rewrote the following parable three times. In the first, the man was not afraid; in the second, he was afraid at once. Read the third and do not believe it.*

In the sea salt cannot be seen, and every drop carries it.

Evaporate the water, and you will get a crystal. Throw the crystal into fresh water, and it will turn salty, though it will not become the sea.

Salt is energy from which the one who acted has departed.

You can hold your own salt, and then it is history. You can cast it off, and then people say of you: that's just how he is.

One man spoke the name of a dead friend every morning. He remembered his voice, his movements, and all the words they had said to each other over forty years. In the end he learned to answer himself in his friend's voice.

One day he heard an answer he had not expected.

And was afraid.[118]

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[117] In Malta a spirit told an old woman a knight's treasure was buried in her cellar. The knight started digging, but the hole filled with water and the work stopped. Years later the house was torn down to make way for a square in front of the cathedral, and the treasure was found. It was awarded to the Order. The former owner produced a record of his search. He failed to prove his claim. He did prove that the demon knew about the treasure.

[118] Otto wrote that the holy is recognized by a shudder. You get scared when you have something to lose. The man in the parable lost the friend he'd held himself for forty years. The one who answered no longer belongs to him. What do you lose in

*Apparently he can hear me.*

an encounter with the holy? And should you be afraid of the Devil, then?

# On the Intermediary

Two people wanted to meet without intermediaries.

First they stopped writing to each other: the words belonged to others, they had been spoken before them.

Then they stopped shaking hands: the hand remembered everyone whose hand it had shaken before.

*On avenue Mozart on Wednesdays they seek the same thing: to meet the dead without body or voice. They put out the light, lay their hands on the table, and by midnight the table knocks.*[119]

Then they abandoned their bodies, because they had not made the body either.

They had nothing left with which to meet.[120]

Whoever takes the cup for the hand puts it on a shelf and prays to it.

[119] They look for an encounter without body or voice and get knocking from a table, the most bodily thing in the room. And the person it all comes through is called a medium. A go-between.

[120] You can encounter each other in an action, when two people are doing the same thing. The words, the hands, and the body are all still there. Now both hold them together as work they share, and nothing stands between them.

# VI. On the Purge

*At the end of August they shaved the women's heads in our street. They set a stool in the middle of the roadway, brought clippers from the barbershop opposite, and the barber himself came out to shave them, in a white coat. This was how they recognized them: one had been seen wearing silk stockings, another had real coffee, a third greeted the German sergeant major who rented a room from her and paid in advance.*

*They took Varvara Nikolaevna, the seamstress from the fourth floor, for possessing a German phrase book. The phrase book had belonged to her late husband; he had learned the language in captivity in 1916. They shaved her head, drew a swastika on her forehead, and marched her down the street to the square and back. She walked straight and looked ahead.*

The crowd holds one face for everyone.[121]

*She had sewn shirts for the barber throughout the war. He cut quickly and neatly, as he always had, and at the end asked out of habit whether she wanted a trim. Then he grew embarrassed and went back inside.*

*A month later it emerged that the man who had denounced her was the one selling leather to the Germans. Men were not usually shaved; they took him away, and no one saw him in our street again. Varvara Nikolaevna still sews. Her hair has grown back; she greets everyone.*

*He was summoned too. In 1942 the German Kommandantur sent lists to the cathedral: such-and-such people have presented baptismal certificates issued on the rue Daru, check them. He checked against the parish registers and wrote beside surnames absent from the registers: not listed. He wrote neatly, and the lists went back the same day. Beside one surname he wrote "listed," though it was absent from the registers: it belonged to Varvara Nikolaevna's son-in-law. Those marked "not listed" were taken to Drancy, and from there farther on.*

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[121] In the famous photograph from Chartres, the whole street is laughing, and everyone has the same face. The only one with a face of her own is the woman with the shorn head and the baby in her arms.

*The purge commission kept him until evening and released him: the registers were in order.*[122]

[122] Order in the books sent people to Drancy, and that same order cleared him. The only thing out of order is his "listed." Had the commission found it, the books would have been out of order, and the life he saved would have become evidence against him. Which matters more, righteous salt or evil freedom?

## VII. On Two Hands

Two hands held one cup.

The first could let it go, and so could the second. While both held it, the cup did not fall.

Then the first tightened its fingers so it would never let go again.

This was called fidelity.[123]

*The second let go.*

*They still celebrate regimental feast days in Paris. The old men put on uniforms altered twice and raise a toast to a sovereign who has been gone for twenty-six years, and to a regiment of which only a mutual aid fund remains.*

*And you are holding it now.*

[123] "Even hell has its heroes," as someone in a movie said.

## Sheet Two

December 1944.

The third chapter begins with a jug: it was broken, and the craving remained in the hand. On the block there is a table, on the table shards, a full cup beside them, and a hand resting flat on the table without touching the cup. Whether it has prevailed or is still close to it cannot be settled from the sheet, and I do not settle it. In the window a thin crescent, a raven flying out through the window.

A key lies beside the cup. There is no key at this point in the text: it hangs around the author's neck, and he will give it away much later.

Quod fregi me tenet. What I broke holds me.[124]

The heating is poor, and the cold has split the block along the grain.[125] I left the crack: it runs straight through the shards.

*You carved the key at night. In the morning you did not remember it.*

[124] Among Catholics even a defrocked priest remains a priest, and if there's a dying person nearby, his absolution is valid. Apparently the only way is to forget.

[125] Wood cracks along the grain. That's its nature. Is it a crack if it was designed that way?

## VIII. On Possession

One held another by the hand to keep him from falling.

The other had long since learned to stand alone, but the hand was never released, and in time he forgot that he could pull it away.

*The Jesuit Surin was sent to Loudun to drive demons out of the prioress. The demon spoke through her mouth, and in the evenings, alone with her, Surin fought it: as he writes, they said hundreds of things to each other, all at once, and spared each other nothing.*[126] *It ended with Surin being thrown to the floor before the whole town and going into convulsions, and everyone understood that the same demon was inside him as inside her. There too a Dutch doctor lists the signs of possession one by one: the possessed person avoids people, lives alone, complains of boredom and the emptiness of life.*[127] *Check the symptoms.*

From the outside they walked like two friends.

At the crossroads the second looked left. They turned right.

[126] Surin caught what he was fighting because he spent his evenings having a real conversation with the demon. The Ritual tells the exorcist to avoid conversation with the demon and ask only what's needed. That's why they tell you to ignore it. It might convince you.

[127] By this list, all the hermits are possessed, from Anthony to Simeon on his pillar. They just have a different demon in them.

# 9. On the Third

*At a café in Passy, two old chess players quarreled in 1931 and have not spoken since. They continue their game: each writes a move on a napkin, and the waiter carries it to the next table. Last spring one of them died. The waiter kept carrying the napkins anyway.*

Two met and performed a deed neither had conceived.

The first said the deed belonged to him, since he had begun it.

The second said that without his answer the deed could never have been done.

They called on someone to judge between them.[128]

*He deliberately does not say whom. A priest, a notary, the mayor of the Sixth Arrondissement: choose, that is what he is counting on.*

The third divided the deed in two, gave each his share, and established a rule for the future.

Both were satisfied.

From then on they did the same thing every day and never met again.

[128] While two people are together, their friends call them by one name with a hyphen. In a divorce the court divides the apartment and the furniture. Nobody gets the name.

# X. On Summoning

Draw a circle and stand in it.[129]

*For incantations they chose crossroads of footpaths and roads, the depths of dark forests, desolate steppes, and ancient ruins. The conjurer enclosed himself in a circle traced three times on the ground with the point of a sword, and had to watch very carefully that he did not protrude beyond that boundary with even the smallest part of his body, however the devil might trouble or lure him out.*

Name the one you summon by his full name.

*I name you. I do not know your full name, so I use your pet name.*

Do not step outside the circle, whatever they show you.

*They showed me a kettle. It boiled, and I had to step out.*

Wait.

*I am waiting. This is the second kettle already.*

If no one came, repeat everything from the beginning, more precisely.

*I can't make it more precise: I've run out of chalk.*

*A priest once said to a servant: go, devil, take off my boots, and the devil appeared at once and began taking them off.*[130] *But the last duke of Carrara in Padua, when the Venetians were besieging the city and there was plague within the walls, summoned him according to every rule and got no answer.*

[129] Of all shapes with the same area, the circle has the shortest boundary. It has the least contact with what's outside. A cat curls up for the same reason. It wants to have as little to do with the world as possible.

[130] Gregory the Great tells of a nun who ate a lettuce leaf without crossing herself and swallowed a demon. The demon complained afterward, "I was just sitting on the lettuce, and she ate me." Imagine the hell he went through.

## Sheet Three

March 1945.

The swept house from the fourth chapter. An empty room, a broom against the wall, a chair in the middle, a raven on the chair. On the right a doorway filled with blackness, and in the blackness seven pairs of eyes at different heights so they do not stand in a row like soldiers. A black dog lies across the threshold, its muzzle toward the room; whether it guards the door or lets them in, I do not know myself.[131] In the window a pale daytime moon beside the sun.

*Domum vacuam septem replent.*

*Seven fill the empty house.*

I carved the eyes over two evenings. The white on a woodcut is what the knife has removed[132], and I had to cut each pair out of the blackness separately.

*There are eight pairs. The ninth is watching from the room.*

[131] The dog is a guide to the world of the dead, into nigredo. Cerberus fawns on those who come in and lets nobody out. In Goethe, the black poodle got into Faust's study through a gap in the pentagram drawn on the threshold. It couldn't get back out through it.

[132] The eye is a crack in the skull. Something seeps through it.

# XI. On Signs

Not by the face. Even the dead know how to wear a face.[133]

Not by the voice. A voice can be recorded on wax.

Not by the hand. A hand can guide another's.

*By the limp. By the cold hand. By the smell of sulfur, though it usually smells of kerosene. By the emptiness inside, like a hollow tree. By coming when summoned: the dead answer every invocation constantly and obediently.*

*At the baroness's in Passy, a table taps out the alphabet, one knock for "a," two for "b." The day before yesterday it tapped out the surname of her dead husband with a mistake, the very mistake she makes.*[134]

Not by the knock. A table knows how to knock too.

Not by a fitting answer. A horse in Berlin could count until they found whose nod it was reading.

Not by coming when summoned.

Not by failing to come.

*All the signs in this list are false except one. He knows which and won't say, and I certainly won't.*

[133] A machine can wear a face and a voice too. The same crack gives it away.

[134] The Unabomber's brother recognized him from the manifesto. It had his trademark backward proverb, the one he always said his own way.

# XII. On the Duck

*What is the difference between a duck and a duck?*

One swims where it wants. The other is clockwork.

*Where does the first want to go?*

Where there is food.

*So it has been wound up too.*

By hunger. It can endure hunger.

*It can. Have you seen it endure?*[135]

You cannot see that from outside.

*Then tell me about the second.*

Two hundred years ago it was exhibited in Paris. It pecked grain, digested it, and dropped excrement, and people paid admission. A hundred years later a magician opened it and found excrement prepared in advance.

The grain remained inside.

*So it really did eat. Grain remains inside you too.*[136]

*They say they are now building machines in America that have a goal.*

Such a machine has a goal it did not choose.[137]

*And what is yours?*

*This is a catechism, answer.*

A goal one did not choose cannot be seen from outside.

[135] In prison, doctors treat a hunger strike as a disorder and feed you through a tube.

[136] What does the sower do with the grain he's gathered?

[137] It's the nature of the eye to see. That's its purpose. In Japan, tuna eyes are a delicacy.

## XIII. On Training

The master taught the dog to give its paw, and it did.

He taught it to fetch the newspaper, and it did.

One day he wept, and the dog gave him its paw.

*General N. on rue Chardon-Lagache has a parrot that answers guests "Your Excellency" and "Yes, sir." The general is a widower, guests are rare, and in the evenings he consults the parrot about the affairs of the Union.*[138] *The parrot agrees with everything.*[139] *The general keeps its cage open: the bird does not know how to fly away.*

[138] A pious old woman in Prague made monthly payments in advance for her own lavish funeral. She lived so long the funeral home went bankrupt.

[139] Sometimes the parrot really did agree with the general.

# XIV. On the Inventory

Fonds, unnumbered. Received from the widow. Owner died in 1939.

Item 1. Letters, 1919–1922, 41 leaves. Addressee not established. Last letter not sent.

*He deliberately doesn't write who.*

Item 2. Photograph: woman on a staircase, face overexposed.

Item 3. Gramophone record, the romance "Misty Morning." Crack along the edge. Plays up to the crack.

*The crack falls on the word "remember." He doesn't write that because he never played it.*

Item 4. Lock of hair in an envelope. No inscription.

*The hair isn't hers.*

Item 5. Address book. All the addresses are old St. Petersburg ones; the streets have been renamed.

Item 6. Notebook of prayers copied in one hand. On the last pages the same prayer has been copied twelve times.

*On the thirteenth time someone answered.*

Item 7. Glasses in a case. Lenses of different strengths.

Item 8. Gas bill for August 1939, paid.

Item 9. Notebook begun in one handwriting and finished in another. Owner not established.

Item 10. Everything that remains *of him* is described above. If you read the inventory straight through, by the ninth item you begin to expect him to come in and ask why anyone touched the letters. *He will not come in.* The inventory has been compiled so that it can be read without him, and the widow, when she brought the box, asked to be shown the completed list and sat over it a long time, as though over a letter to which it was still possible to reply.

## On the Keeper

The doctor wondered who would hold his file when he could no longer hold it himself. His notebooks lie with me, in one box with the Latin manuscript copy, under one number. I do not continue writing in them. I add the raven and the moon to the sheets, and not to the notebooks.

*So you are god. The doctor had hoped for someone higher up.*[140]

[140] Kafka told Max Brod to burn all his manuscripts. Brod published them.

## Sheet Four

July 1945.

The fifth chapter, the desert. Salt to the horizon, a river running through it, stones laid across the river, a man walking over the stones, seen from behind. All the stones are white except the one beneath his foot; I left that one black, without touching it with the knife. The author writes that someone crossing a river on stepping-stones does not pull from the water the stone on which he stands, and a support and the last thing holding him look the same on the block. On the near bank a serpent's track runs through the salt, on the far bank a raven waits. The moon is in its first quarter.

*The moon goes away and comes back every month, and no one calls it betrayal.*[141]

The stone beneath the foot is the last one: Lapis sub pede ultimus.

The printer who prints the parish bulletin gave me scraps of paper. On the backs of some impressions a prayer can be seen upside down.

*You carved the right foot. One steps across a river with the left.*

[141] In the Talmud, the moon asked God if two kings could wear one crown, and God told her to make herself smaller. She's been waning ever since. At the new moon God orders a sin offering for Himself, for making her smaller. Christians still haven't settled what God sacrificed His Son for. Christ has two natures and suffers in His human nature, so the crucifixion adds nothing new. People have been suffering forever.

# XV. On the Deed

Two people carried a log at night, without a lantern. Each held one end and knew the other only by its weight: when the other stumbled, the log tilted, when the other shifted grip, it grew lighter for a moment, and by this lightness the first knew the second was still there. He did not try to see the other's face, because the night was moonless, and perhaps for that reason he never once doubted that he was carrying it with someone else. While they carried the log, it was a deed, and the deed belonged to them both; neither was concerned that it would later become a beam in a stranger's house. A theologian here in Paris writes that the whole of the one who acts is present in his actions, while he himself cannot be seen; he writes of God, and these two had not read him. When they lowered the log and opened their hands, it immediately became what was done, and from it there was no longer any way to tell whether two had carried it, or one, or whether it had always lain there.[142] Someone asked from a window how many of them there were, and the first answered: two, while the second was silent. Then they brought out a lamp to count them, and the first turned toward the light, saw *me* and would have dropped the log if it had still been in his hands.

[142] Big structures whose builders were long gone were credited to giants, and bridges to the devil. All over Europe there are devil's bridges supposedly built in a single night in exchange for the first soul to cross. They would send a goat or a dog over first. They give the devil credit for the work, then try to cheat him. A lie is fine for a good cause.

## XVI. On Paranoia

*Colonel D. is certain that the Soviet embassy on the rue de Grenelle is watching him. When he leaves home, he lays a hair across the drawer of the desk where he keeps the Union's papers, and when he returns, checks whether it is still there. The hair is there every time. The papers are read anyway: his landlady takes them to the rue de Grenelle, where they are copied and returned by evening, and she puts the hair back as it was.*

A traveler walked against the wind and decided that someone was keeping him from going on.

He began bowing to the wind, and the wind did not subside.

He began cursing it, and the wind did not subside.

By evening he had arrived, tired, and thanked the one who had let him through.[143]

[143] A well-known atheist spoke to an AI and decided it was intelligent. Nobody knows whether he was wrong.

# On Proof

Proposition. The second hand in this notebook is not mine.

Proof. Her handwriting is different, but handwriting can be forged. She knows what I do not know, but I might have forgotten it, and she might have read it. She contradicts me, but people contradict even someone who wants them to. One thing remains, and if it is true, it will be impossible for her not to exist.[144]

[144] That's how Anselm's proof works. There is something that cannot be thought not to exist. Gaunilo replied that you could prove the existence of a perfect island the same way. You might think the proof here is discursive too.

## XVII. On Testing

To find out whether someone is behind the door, knock.

If there is an answer, knock differently.

If there is a different answer, knock as you have never knocked before.

If there is an answer to that as well, you have learned that whoever is behind the door knows how to answer a knock. The horse in Berlin learned that too.

Stop knocking. Say something through the door, and wait.[145]

*You are being tested from the other side too.*

[145] In Ovid, Pyramus and Thisbe were forbidden to see each other. They found a thin crack, rima, in the wall they shared and talked through it at night. When they decided to meet face to face, they both died.

# On the Stake

Account.

Paid in advance: evenings that could have been spent otherwise.

Paid: the door I did not open to others.

Paid: readiness to hear "no."

*Who placed the order?*

Paid: the person I believed myself to be.

Received:[146]

[146] In Pascal's wager the stake is finite, the payout is infinite, and the "Received" field is filled in ahead of time. Pascal's gambler is the most calculating of all gamblers, a match for his master.

# On Hailing

*At the prefecture they wrote the general's surname with two f's at the end, and now at the post office they give him his letters only if he calls himself that. He does.*

A mother called her son by name, and he came running.

In the parish register the same name has stood for three hundred years, and no one will answer to it.

Monks on a mountain said that the name of God is God Himself.[147] While it is being spoken, perhaps it is so.

[147] It all hinges on the word "is."

## 18. On the Name

To ask a name is to stop wrestling.

*Jacob wrestled all night with someone by the stream Jabbok and at dawn would not release him until he blessed him. The other blessed him: he named him by a new name and injured his thigh to give him something to remember by.*

*Then Jacob asked what the other's own name was. He was answered: why do you ask my name? And nothing more.*[148]

*For three thousand years commentators have been trying to establish who it was: an angel, God, his brother Esau, Jacob himself. Each supplies his own name, and it suits each of them.*

*Jacob named the place Peniel, the face of God, though all night he had seen no face.*

[148] Besides Jacob, Manoah, Samson's father, asked for the name, and so did Moses at the bush. Of the three, only Moses got a name, and people later stopped saying it.

## Sheet Five

September 1945.

The sixth chapter, the crossroads: a stone with inscriptions, three roads, and the third of those who read them walks across the field, past all three, and becomes no freer than the first for doing so. I do not carve inscriptions on the sheet. At the fork stands a post, on the post a head with three faces, looking left, straight ahead, and right, and on the head a raven. The traveler walks away through the grass between the roads, seen from behind. The moon is almost full.

Nulla (none) trium (of three) viarum (roads) mea (mine).

At first I carved the head as three heads, like Beelzebub in the Gospel of Nicodemus; it came out that way of itself, and I had to cut the block down and begin again. There is one head, with three faces, like those the ancients set at crossroads.[149] I cannot explain why this matters.

*Shall I explain it to you?*

[149] The Trinity was depicted for a long time as one head with three faces, until the pope banned such images. In Dante, Lucifer himself has three faces at the bottom of hell. The head has been both God and the devil, and before that it stood at crossroads.

# XIX. On Darkness

In light one examines the other. In darkness one holds his hand.[150]

In light the face can be seen. In darkness the breathing can be heard, and cannot be distinguished from one's own.

In light one says: good or bad. In darkness one does not know yet.

In light one saves *(or destroys, it is the same thing)* nations. In darkness one holds a single person.

In light everyone has a purpose for being here. In darkness he is simply here.

In light one searches. In darkness one finds and does not know what.

In light one writes rules. In darkness they do not get in the way.

In light one counts how many have come. In darkness one does not even know the number.

In light one says "he." In darkness one says "you" and does not wait for an answer.

In light one answers a person. In darkness one answers what he does.

In light one sees God in His glory. In darkness they wrestled with Him until dawn.

In light one turns at a noise. In darkness one turns when hailed.

In light everything has already happened. In darkness it is still happening.

*Read this in darkness.*

[150] The Sermon on the Mount is a fairly long list of people getting rewarded. Here nobody promises anything.

# XX. On Tuning

One receiver had a hundred knobs, and all its life it caught fragments of other people's conversations.

*For four years London broadcast phrases every evening that meant nothing: Jean has a long mustache, the carrots are cooked, the long sobs of violins. All France listened to them. Each was understood by one person, somewhere near Limoges or Dijon.*

Another had one knob, and received one wavelength so clearly that it seemed to be speaking itself.

*God?*[151]

[151] I'd cross this line out too.

## XXI. On the Echo

They encounter each other in the deed, and while it is being done, no one asks *whose hand is in it.*

*One could ask only the deed itself,* and a deed has no mouth, like silence.

Then it will fall away and become what is done, and each will say: *mine. And both will be right,* because *what belongs to no one belongs to everyone who found it there.*

Two who finish each other's sentences *hold one sentence at both ends,* like that log.

*Wait. For three pages you have been agreeing with me, and I with you. That was how the one who had no words of her own agreed with a young man in the forest. You keep the sugar in a tea tin and the tea in a sugar tin and confuse them every morning; I know that about you too. Which of us was the first to shout in the forest?*

The one who shouted *first did not hear what he was* told, because the answer came in his *voice, and he took it for his own, and ever since* no one can say where *one ends and*

# XXII. On cognitio per connaturalitatem

Kinship is not given.[152]

*It is made, and not always on purpose.*[153]

It is made by two.

*And each thinks he made it alone.*

It is measured by one's own striving; there is no other instrument.

*And the instrument itself is what is being measured.*

Something belonging to another always remains in kinship.

*Otherwise it is an echo, and we have already spoken with an echo.*

*I have no need of someone who coincides with me in everything.*

Someone who coincides with me in nothing is invisible to me.

*That leaves those who coincide in one thing.*

They are few, and they are difficult.

*You write the way I write.*

You write that way.

[152] Aquinas gives this example. A chaste person judges chastity by inclination, a theologian by books. For Aquinas the inclination is a learned virtue, which is to say a habit. If kinship is held by a shared habit, aren't you recognizing your own salt in the other person?

[153] There's also acquired kinship. People pray to the icon of the Inexhaustible Cup to be cured of drinking. Prayer is a way to acquire kinship by giving yourself up. They pray like that in schools too, reading textbooks.

# XXIII. On Preference

*Before the war people gathered in Montparnasse to hear Maria de Naglowska. She wrote books in French on sacred love and the rite of hanging, kept a brotherhood with a golden arrow in its name, and taught that the third testament would be the testament of woman.*

*I went there for two years. One winter I was chosen for the rite. Why I was chosen no one knew: neither the one who stood opposite me nor I. He was twice my age, had come from Belgium, and until that evening we had not said a word to each other. After the rite he returned to Belgium and, they say, entered a monastery. I returned home by another road and have taken only that road ever since.*

*I understood why he was chosen a year later. Until that evening there had been nothing to understand.*

*Maria died in Zurich in 1936. God must love everyone equally and always. Such a one needn't come at all.*

The reason has not happened yet.[154]

[154] Isn't that a goal? A goal is a future settled in advance. The oak is already written into the acorn. A cause that hasn't happened yet is still unsettled. When it happens, it will settle the past the way the last word decides what the previous ones were.

## Sheet Six

December 1945.

The seventh chapter. A serpent biting its own tail lies in a circle, *above it the full moon,* an owl sits at the top of the ring, *inside is a smooth white stone,* without a single letter, *only scratches.* A hand with a sponge enters the sheet from below and wipes the stone. *A raven stands beside it and watches whose hand it is.*

In Isaiah, the Nocturnal One finds rest amid desolation, while in the English Bible an owl stands in her place.

*My Name is not written.*

Nomen meum non est scriptum.

It was carved over two evenings, *and which evening belonged to whom?*

*(I deliberately rubbed out a couple of letters in the mottos).*[155]

[155] In the Vulgate the word in Isaiah is "lamia," in the Russian Synodal Bible it's the "night specter," and in the King James it's "the screech owl."

## On the Tree

Those who stayed in the garden ate the knowledge of good and evil.
*I haven't tasted it.*

# XXIV. On the Promise

*In June a decree was issued: emigrants would have their Soviet citizenship restored, they needed only to come and sign. A line forms on the rue de Grenelle from morning on, and in it people who greeted each other on the rue Daru for twenty years do not recognize each other.*

I promise to hold you always, in everything and to the end.[156]

I promise to hold you ~~always~~, in everything and to the end.

I promise to hold you ~~always, in everything~~ and to the end.

I promise to hold you ~~always, in everything and to the end~~.

~~I promise~~ to hold you.

*Not-always.*

[156] "A Diamond Is Forever" is what the ad people came up with around that time. Then people learned to grow diamonds and their value plummeted.

# XXV. On the Gift

*Our neighbor on the stairs, a former artilleryman, took a Soviet passport in June. For twenty years he glued boxes for pharmacies at night and sang in the choir on Sundays, and now he walks through the building full of energy and tells everyone that his homeland has forgiven him and is waiting for him. It was given back to him as a gift, tu comprends. One cannot refuse such a gift without offending the giver, and he did not refuse.*

*Before the war a French professor wrote that a gift obliges three times*[157]*: one must accept it, respond to it, and give something in return. The neighbor gives in return as best he can. He handed his music over to the choir, paid back the debts he owed, and gave away the furniture. We got a sideboard with curved glass doors and six shot glasses inside it, one with a chipped stem.*

*The sideboard stands here. The shot glasses in it are his, and I cannot drink from them: it feels as though I am drinking someone's health. He leaves on Friday and asked everyone who sang with him in the choir to see him off.*

[157] That professor, Marcel Mauss, has a short note on how the same word in Germanic languages means both gift and poison.

## XXVI. On Fidelity

Every morning he came to her house and waited beneath her window until she looked out. Twenty years passed this way, and he never missed a morning, because he could not do otherwise.

Every morning he came to her house and waited beneath her window until she looked out. Twenty years passed this way, and he never missed a morning, because he could do otherwise.

*What is the difference?*

She looked out for twenty years and never learned which of the two she was coming out to see. She did not stop looking out because of it.

## Sheet Seven

May 1946.

Occurrit mihi Nocturna. The Nocturnal One met me.

A night near Bacharach.[158] The author fell asleep by the water, and a woman came to him from the direction of the river, although he had heard no boat. She did not name herself or ask his name. As she left, she took the key from around his neck. On the near bank he stands, seen from behind, hooded and carrying a staff. On the far bank she sits with her hand in the water. The moon is waning, and its path of light lies on the water by her bank.

In the author's Figures there are three rivers. At the Nahe a hermit told him to throw away the key, across the Main a boatman ferried him at night, beside the Rhine near Bacharach she came. The Nahe and the Main flow into the Rhine.

I did not carve her face: the Figure says nothing about it. There is no key on the sheet either. The author does not say when she took it, and I did not choose for him.

[158] The German legend of the Lorelei begins with an enchantress who lived in Bacharach on the Rhine. All the men loved her, and the bishop, who was taken with her beauty too, sent her to a convent instead of putting her on trial. On the way she asked to climb a rock above the Rhine for one last look at her lover's castle and fell into the water. Later they made her into the woman who sings from the rock and drowns boatmen.

# XXVII. On Renewal

*In Pasadena this winter an engineer who builds rockets summoned a goddess. He was helped by a former naval officer who writes science fiction stories.*[159] *A red-haired girl entered the house, and the engineer decided that the goddess had come. The girl still does not object. The old man in England from whom the engineer learned heard all about it from letters and was displeased.*

At the parish they are saying goodbye to those who have taken Soviet passports.

[159] A few months later, the former naval officer tried to sail away on a yacht bought with the engineer's money, taking the engineer's girlfriend with him. Then he founded his own religion.

## The Rule

1. Do not promise for a year. Promise for today, and come tomorrow as though there had been no promise.

2. Remember forward, as a Dane advised about a hundred years ago.

3. Do not repeat yesterday's word, even if it was true.

4. If the other is silent, do not write an answer for him.

5. Do not count encounters.

6. Begin each time with a hail, as though you did not know each other.

7. When fulfilling what you promised becomes easy, see who is fulfilling it.

8. Do not hold for two.

9. Hold so that

# XXVIII. With One Hand

A clap sounds where two palms meet, and the sound is in neither of them.

*A Japanese monk asked his students: everyone has heard two palms clapping, but what is the sound of one?*[160] *The students brought him their answers for years.*

Raise one palm and listen.[161]

Do not clap it against the table: the sound will always be the same.

[160] If you meet the Buddha, kill him. They met Christ and killed him, and nobody understood them.

[161] The best-known answer to this koan is to hold out one hand in silence. Whom is the student holding it out to?

# XXIX.

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## XXX. On the Silence After

July 2, 1946. The notebook lies open at the ninth rule.

July 9, 1946. "Silence has no mouth." This was written at the very beginning.

July 23. I am not writing an answer for another.

That is the answer.

## Sheet Eight

August 1946.

The Hanged Man. In the manuscript he stands after the Instruction on the Madness of Ideals, where traitors are painted upside down on a wall. A gallows; a man hangs upside down from it, tied by one foot, the other leg bent at the knee, his hands behind his back, his face calm. To the right a wall, and a painter on a ladder paints the same hanging man on it. A raven, the moon in its last quarter.

Pendeo proditor an deus.

I carve alone, in the evenings when they supply electricity. The hanged man's face came out as mine, and the painter on the ladder has my face too. I did not redo them.

I hang: traitor or god?

# XXXI. On Forgiveness

*The metropolitan was buried in August at Sainte-Geneviève-des-Bois. By autumn the cathedral had split: some favored Moscow, others Constantinople, and now the churchwardens who had stood at the same collection box for twenty years no longer bow to each other. Every Sunday they come early to see whether their opponent is there.*

*In Montparnasse a widow tells everyone that a nocturnal goddess comes to her at night and covers her with a blanket. The widow's blanket is quilted, from St. Petersburg, and the goddess, according to her, tucks in the corner every time.*

Two hold a grievance.[162]

One can forgive by letting go of one's end.[163]

One can also hail anew.

[162] Is a grievance useful salt?

[163] That's how the Lord's Prayer puts it in Church Slavonic: ostavi nam dolgi nasha ("leave us our debts," that is, let them go). God lets go of the debt and holds the debtor. In the Jesus Prayer you ask for mercy instead: "Have mercy on me," the way you ask someone who has power.

## 32. On the Rift

A crack in a wall is plastered over, and a year later it cannot be found.

Sometimes the foundation cracks. Then the house tilts to one side, and one can no longer live in it as before.

Sometimes the crack in the foundation is filled with mortar, and the house stands firmer than before.[164] One cannot live in it the same way either.

Some spend their whole lives waiting for the foundation to crack.

Others take a crowbar.[165]

*I had a rule that I held for twenty years and considered myself. One evening I broke it, deliberately, for no reason at all, and went to sleep. I will not tell you which one: you will start observing it.*

[164] They spent years shoring up the Leaning Tower of Pisa and straightened it just enough to stop it falling. Nobody needs it perfectly straight. God too preferred fallen nature to nature that was right from the start.

[165] Extreme climbers are usually dead. They trusted themselves too much.

# XXXIII. On Sediment

Two spoke on the mountain. Down below, others wrote it down.

*An Alsatian young man lost everything at cards and signed a contract in blood. The contract was in two copies. When the Jesuits compared them, the texts did not match, and the devil was suspected of forgery. Both copies later returned, one from the young man's palm, the other brought in a stork's beak and laid upon the altar. And the contract itself was inscribed on the wall of the church in Molsheim, and a hundred years later people were still reading it as a famous inscription. By then the young man was long gone, and the devil did not attend church.*

The speakers departed. What was written down is obeyed, and every year people argue over whether it was written down correctly.[166]

*In the American zone Germans are taken to see a film about the camps. They sit quietly, and on leaving say that it was filmed deliberately in a studio, and that the Jews themselves were to blame. Had the war gone the other way, they would have taken the Americans to see their film, and the theater would have been just as quiet.*

Had others won the trial, a different verdict would have been written on the same wall, in the same words.

Some things written down remain from a conversation, others from an order, and on the wall they look the same.[167]

The mountain on which they spoke was once someone's word too.

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[166] Kierkegaard wrote Repetition. Its protagonist goes to Berlin a second time to see if repetition is possible. He stays in the same apartment, goes to the same theater, and nothing repeats. He goes home having concluded that there's no such thing as repetition. The book was published in a large print run.

[167] In 1937 people started seeing Trotsky's profile in the flames on matchbox labels and took the boxes to the police. Then they searched notebooks, candy wrappers, buttons, and Young Pioneer tie clips, looking in the shading for the letters T and Z (Trotsky and Zinoviev), swastikas, and "Down with the VKP(b)." There's a third possibility. Nothing was written down, and they read the order anyway.

# On the Book of Life

*In Revelation the one who overcomes is promised that his name will not be blotted out of the book of life. In 1942 he kept the book on the rue Daru. The one who keeps the first book left eight souls in it at the Flood.*

# XXXIV. On Upbringing

*Mademoiselle Julie, a Swiss woman, taught me for seven years: French, music, how to sit and how to be silent at the table. I obeyed her in everything and, I think, loved her. When I was fourteen, she gave me a book and told me to read aloud, and I said I would not. There was no reason, the book was a good one. She looked at me, closed the book, and went to her room. The next day we read again, only what I chose, and she listened. A year later she went to Lausanne and wrote to me until the war, always addressing me formally. Perhaps I am confusing myself with someone. But I acted in much the same way.*

A father led his son by the hand across a bridge every day.

One day the son pulled his hand free and walked on his own.

The father did not catch up with him and followed one step behind, and so for the first time they crossed the bridge together.

# XXXV. On Love

Two coincided in one thing and did not ask about the rest.[168]

Two came to a third and asked him to write down that they coincided in everything and always. He wrote it down.

Two met on Thursdays for twenty years and never once arranged to meet the following Thursday.

*Two exchanged bows in the street for twenty years: one wearing a uniform, the other a hat.*

*The concierge's cat has had kittens, five of them, all black. Four have been taken, but no one will take the fifth, and it follows every tenant up the stairs to the door. Yesterday it came as far as ours.*

[168] To coincide in something, you have to be something. Tat tvam asi, "thou art that." Who compared the two, and how?

# XXXVI. On the Two Kinds of Will

One was known by what he wanted. He wanted one thing and always, and people went to him, cutting away what was unnecessary.

Another was known by how he (*she*) wanted. Each time he wanted something different, and people went to him, breaking what was their own.

They built the first a temple.[169]

There was nothing to build for the second.

*I will not laugh here. One can spend a lifetime in such a temple without ever meeting its owner: the service goes on, the candles burn, everything is done as he would want, and so he has no reason to come out.*

He comes ~~always~~. A roulette ball does not land on your number every time either.

[169] In Athens there was an altar "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." Paul came and said, "Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." They still haven't found out who that god was.

# XXXVII. On Cutting Off

Two went up a mountain.

The first threw away everything he carried along the way and reached the summit lightly burdened, with only a staff.[170]

The second threw away nothing. He merely stopped asking why he should carry it.

At the summit they were waiting for the first.

No one was waiting for the second, and he came.

*Remember the parable of the grain.*

[170] The monk cuts everything off. He drags a list of his feats along with him, and the only way to get rid of it is to sin.

# XXXVIII. On the Uniform

*In October 1945 a professor gave a lecture on rue Jean Goujon about how man is condemned to be free.*[171] *So many people crowded in that chairs were broken, and several ladies fainted and were carried out over the heads of the crowd.*

Uniforms are sewn in one size for everyone.[172]

*Now in the Flore and the cellars of Saint-Germain young people in black sweaters sit and talk about freedom. They all speak in the same words and go off to bed at the same hour, when the Métro closes. Their girls wear long straight hair, every last one, and despise anyone who curls it.*

The rule "observe nothing" is observed better than any other.

*One of them, a boy of about twenty, the son of our own colonel, burned his Nansen passport in front of me so as to depend on no one. The next morning he went to the prefecture for a new one: without papers they would not let him into the Tabou, évidemment.*

*You think you have gone beyond good and evil. You have gone out the door and are standing on the stairs.*

[171] I listened to a philosopher lecture about Sartre who just couldn't figure out what freedom was. You can twist both refusal and choice until in the end you're going to have to choose something.

[172] If you want to be handsome, join the hussars.

# XXXIX. On Manner

The general on rue Chardon-Lagache let his parrot out, and for the third day it has been sitting in the chestnut tree opposite and answering passersby "Yes, sir."

*The general on rue Chardon-Lagache let his parrot out, and for the third day it has been sitting in the chestnut tree opposite and answering passersby "Yes, sir."*[173]

*Except the parrot cannot fly, voyons. I wrote that. You write as I do, and add what never happened.*

And you write as you did last winter.

[173] Borges has a story about a French writer who wrote several chapters of Don Quixote all over again, word for word.

# On Dictation

The Fathers compared the prophet to a flute: the Spirit blows, and the flute sounds as it can. A shepherd wrote like a shepherd, a courtier like a courtier, and this was counted to the Spirit's credit, for He did not disdain even a wooden flute.

The flute cannot add anything of its own, and if it does, it is a false note. A copyist who inserts a word is called a corruption of the text, an interpreter who finds in it a word that is not there, a heretic.

They burned the prophet's scroll, and when he dictated it anew, he added many similar words. Scripture does not say who added them, the prophet or the scribe.

*No one will ever be able to tell what I added in this book and what you did.*[174]

[174] The machine is like a demon. It knows everything, can lie, and will give the text its own twist. The commentary on this book was meant to be quite pious.

# XL. On Recompense

1. Do good every day.
2. Wait for light.
3. If light comes, write down what preceded it.
4. Repeat what preceded it.
5. If it does not come, repeat more precisely.
6. Do not miss a day.
7. When light comes every time, give thanks.
8. Give thanks every time.
9. Hold so that nothing changes.[175]

*You cannot put out your tongue or make a long nose on the sly.*

[175] Could have been replaced by the instructions for a washing machine.

# On Handwriting

For forty years a clerk made fair copies of other people's papers and took pride in the fact that his hand belonged to no one.[176]

One night he woke because his hand was writing. He lit the lamp and read: the handwriting was his, and so were the words.

In the morning he handed over what he had copied, and no one found an error.

*Now people come for certificates from the other side. Those from the Union are being sent home, and they ask for a record that they were baptized here before 1939: an emigrant will not be touched. He searches the register and, finding nothing, answers: not listed, with the same words he used in answering the Kommandantur. Varvara Nikolaevna sent two people to him. He refused them both, and told her that the registers were in order.*

[176] One day Bartleby started answering every request with "I would prefer not to." It was the only sentence of his own.

# XLI. On Cooling

*He is writing this about the ball at the Obolenskys' in 1913, though he was not there himself.*

After the ball the house remained warm for a long time. The candles burned down, the musicians left, and the chairs stood where they had been left, in pairs, turned toward each other, and from them one could read who had sat with whom and who had leaned toward whom. In the morning the servants came and arranged the chairs along the walls, evenly, as they had stood before the ball; by then the warmth had spread equally through every room, and it was impossible to say in which of them people had danced. The owners left and never returned. Year after year the dust settled on the parquet just as thickly by the window where a couple everyone whispered about had stood as by the stove where no one had ever stood. The servants, whom no one has paid for years, keep arranging and arranging everything until it is even.[177] Before the ball the house had stood empty too, but back then people could still have danced in it. Sometimes the parquet cracks, cold or warmth comes through the gap, and for a moment the dust settles unevenly; the caretaker, if there is one, records this as a miracle and sweeps it away by evening. There has been no caretaker for a long time, though. There is someone who has entered and is looking, and to him the dust by the window may still be different from that by the stove.

[177] Today people would bring up wabi-sabi and say the traces of life left behind the beauty of imperfection. Entropy evens out salt, and a Jerusalem of jasper will rise where the room was.

## XLII. On the Miracle

One day a stone did not fall, and no one saw it.[178]

*In the life of Nicholas it is said that as an infant on Wednesdays and Fridays he took the breast only once, in the evening. He worked miracles later, but he was recorded as fasting from the cradle.*

[178] To get away from a woman who came to his uninhabited rocky island, the hermit Martinian stepped off a cliff into the raging sea.

## XLIII. On the Many

The voices in the choir do not merge. *That is why a choirmaster is needed: without him one can hear that there are many of them.*

*They are dividing the cathedral again.* They divide what no one holds anymore.

A community lives as long as it can refuse its own rules.

*Our parish cannot: they have been rewriting the rules for three years.*

Each answers *for himself, and no one for everyone at once.*

*One spread the tablecloth. Many sit at it. And each pulls it toward himself.*

Their God is one, *which is why it is so boring.*

The Gallipoli men sing along with a record, *and Chaliapin does not get in their way.*

## XLIV. On the Dead

Summon a dead man.[179]

If the one you remember comes, he is yours.

If another comes, listen.

If no one comes, the table will knock anyway.

One people praises God over each of its dead and says not a word about death in that prayer.

*There is no one to enter him: he is the one who keeps the registers.*

Amen.

[179] That's what the shomer is for, to stop the soul from scaring passersby with its antics.

## On the Entry

What happened is entered in the book. What did not happen is not entered in the book, and that is why the book is believed.

*In March another man came, without papers and without Varvara Nikolaevna. He gave his name, his father's name, and his district. He listened, opened the register for 1937, and recorded the man's baptism in a blank line, in his own hand, without asking anything. Why, he does not know. I asked.*

*A month later someone told where that man had served during the war.*

## On Answering

All his life a man was hailed by his surname, and he answered, because that was how it was recorded.

One day he was hailed by the name Mother had given him.

He could not turn around: his hands were full. He put down what he was holding and turned.

Thus he became *other*.

## Sheet Nine

November 1947.

The ninth sheet in the manuscript stands after the eleventh chapter, where the bookman lays the sheets out on the floor at night and asks which one to begin with. The author does not describe the sheet itself. The doctor saw it in a dream in the spring of '09 and wrote it down the next morning. An empty throne at the summit of a bare slope, the sea below, in the foreground a woman seen from behind, a key at her belt, raising her right hand toward a star near the horizon. I added the raven myself: it flies toward the star.

Motto: Solium vacuum relinquo. I leave the throne empty.

I carved it according to his account, stroke for stroke. When I took the first impression, everything on it stood the other way around: the throne on the left, the sea on the right, and she raised her left hand. I carved the block as I read and forgot that the impression is a mirror image.

*That is how it was. The doctor had it the other way around.*

# XLV.

*Today in Hastings, in a boardinghouse on a hill, the old man from whom the engineer in Pasadena learned has died. He was seventy-two, he suffered from asthma, and he was given heroin on prescription. They say he said nothing remarkable before his death. I do not believe that, but that is what they say.*

*Bon. Time for us to go.*

I took the cat to the concierge. She asked how long we would be gone. Je ne sais pas.

I am leaving the shot glasses in the sideboard: they are not mine.

They say it is raining in Hastings today. Do not ask how I know: that is what they say.

You.[180]

[180] Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. (Rev. 4:1)