Modern edition | Plain English

Collected volume: Human, All Too Human II

# The Wanderer and His Shadow

Friedrich Nietzsche

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# The Wanderer and His Shadow



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# Human, All-Too-Human, Part II

Friedrich Nietzsche

Plain modern English

Plain-English adaptation by Blue Energy People, Inc. (SUN), using Claude Opus 5.5.

Based on the English translation by Paul V. Cohn.

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Friedrich Nietzsche

Human

All Too Human

A Book for Free Thinkers

Part Two

Translated by

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## Translator's Introduction

The book *Human, All Too Human* came out in pieces between 1878 and 1880. The Second Part is made up of two sections. The first, "Miscellaneous Sayings and Opinions," came out in 1879. The second, "The Wanderer and His Shadow," came out in 1880, when Nietzsche was thirty-five years old. The Preface was added later, in 1886. Taken as a whole, this book is Nietzsche's first long piece of writing. Before it, he had written only his scholarly studies of ancient languages and texts, *The Birth of Tragedy*, and the essays on Strauss, Schopenhauer, and Wagner collected in *Thoughts Out of Season*.

With the volumes of *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche shows himself for the first time as what he truly was: a philosopher. Of course, his earlier writings had already hinted at the thinker to come. These included his purely scholarly works and his essays judging books and music, especially the essay on Richard Wagner at Bayreuth.

Still, those earlier works were only bits and pieces. Hardly anyone could tell from them that a new star in philosophy had risen into view. But by 1878, Nietzsche was clearly in a time of change. The outward sign of this new direction was that he gave up his job as a professor at Basel that year. He quit partly because he was sick, and partly because he was sure that his voice was meant to speak not just to students of ancient languages, but to all of humanity.

Nietzsche himself describes *Human, All Too Human* as "the monument of a crisis," meaning a reminder of a turning point in his life. He could just as well have called it the first crop of a new harvest. Here, for the first time, he uses the form of writing that would become so much his own. We are told, and we can easily believe it, that the book surprised even his closest friends. Wagner had already understood how things

stood between them when the first part came out. The gap between the two men probably grew wider when the Second Part appeared.

The book contains many short sayings. They differ in length and in subject, and they cover the whole territory of human life: people's feelings and hopes, their religions, cultures, and philosophies, and their arts, books, and politics. The writing styles are just as varied. A sharp, witty one-liner and a passage of pure poetry can be found pushing against each other on the same page. Because of this unusual ability to switch between biting mockery and heartfelt beauty, Nietzsche seems like a prose version of the poet Heine.

One or two of the short sayings are especially interesting for English readers. The piece on the writer Sterne (page 60, number 113), which is long enough almost to be called an essay, gives that unpredictable genius full credit, maybe even more than he deserves. The remark about Milton (page 77, number 150) will come as a bit of a shock to English readers. This is especially true for those who believe that in Milton's work, art won out over his strict Puritan religion. We should remember, though, that Nietzsche's opinion here matches Goethe's. Nietzsche also says that Shakespeare's gold should be valued for how much of it there is, rather than for how pure it is (page 81, number 162). This statement also shows a certain snobbishness. It is something Nietzsche picked up from eighteenth-century France, whose way of thinking attracted him so strongly. For Nietzsche, just as for Voltaire, Shakespeare is, in the end, "the great barbarian."

The title of the book can be explained by a line from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: "Truly, even the greatest I found to be all too human." The main theme of these volumes really is the loss of illusions and the tearing down of old ideas. This is not surprising, because everyone has to clear away the junk before they can build something new. So we find little here of Nietzsche's building-up philosophy, to the extent

that he had one. The Superman shows up only faintly, and the idea of Eternal Recurrence, the belief that everything happens again and again forever, does not show up at all. For exactly this reason, *Human, All Too Human* may be the best place to start studying Nietzsche. His later works are hard to follow, both in their style and in their ideas, and in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* these difficulties sometimes become almost impossible to overcome. Here, those difficulties are nearly absent. In fact, the book could almost be called "popular." It stands in the same relation to Nietzsche's later works as Wagner's operas *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin* stand to his huge opera cycle, the *Ring*.

The translator wishes to thank Mr. Thomas Common for carefully checking the manuscript and for his many helpful suggestions.

P. V. C.

# Preface

## 1.

A person should only speak when they cannot stay quiet, and should only speak about what they have truly *overcome*. Everything else is just chatter, "literature," bad manners. My writings talk only about my victories. "I" am in them, together with everything that is against me. It is my very own self, or, if I may use a prouder phrase, my very own innermost being. You may guess that I have a lot beneath me.... But first I always needed time, getting well, distance, and separation. Only then did I feel the first urge to skin something, strip it, lay it bare, and "show" it (or whatever you want to call it), so that the world might know more. That something was always a thing I had lived through and come out the other side of, something I had done or suffered. So all my writings, with one exception (an important one, it's true), should be dated *earlier* than they appear. They always tell of something already "behind me." Some of them, like the first three *Thoughts out of Season*, even need to be pushed back to a time before I wrote and lived through a book I had published earlier. In that case the book was *The Birth of Tragedy*, as anyone with a sharp eye for noticing and comparing could not miss. Take that angry attack on old David Strauss, with his German self-importance, his smugness, and his sloppy way of writing. That was what the first *Thought out of Season* was about. It let out feelings that had driven me long before, back when I was a student, surrounded by German culture and educated narrow-mindedness. (I claim to be the father of the phrase "educated narrow-mindedness," which is now used a lot, and used wrongly a lot.) What I said against the "history sickness," I said as someone who had slowly and painfully recovered from that sickness. And I was not at all ready

to give up on "history" in the future just because she had made me suffer in the past. In the third *Thought out of Season*, I expressed my deep respect for my first and only teacher, the *great* Arthur Schopenhauer. Today I would say it in a far more personal and forceful way. But even then, for my own part, I was already in the middle of doubting all morals and seeing them fall apart. That means I was just as busy criticizing every gloomy outlook up to the present day as I was studying it. As the common people say, I already did not believe in "a single blessed thing," not even in Schopenhauer. It was in this very same period that I wrote an essay I never published, called "On Truth and Lies in a Sense Outside Morality." Then there was even my formal speech in honour of Richard Wagner, given at his great celebration at Bayreuth in 1876. Bayreuth stands for the greatest victory any artist has ever won. That speech carries the strongest mark of my own "personality." Yet underneath, it was a tribute and a thank-you to a piece of my own past. It was a thank-you to the most beautiful but most dangerous calm on my sea voyage, the smooth water before the storm ... and in fact, it was a breaking away and a goodbye. (Was Richard Wagner wrong about this? I don't think so. As long as we still love someone, we don't paint portraits like that. We don't "examine" yet. We don't stand as far back as someone who "examines" has to stand. "Examining needs at least a hidden hostility, the hostility of someone who sees things from the opposite side," it says on page 46 of that very work. It was said with a sly, sad meaning aimed at Wagner himself, which perhaps few people understood.) After many years in between, years of being alone and holding myself back, I finally found the calm that gave me the *strength* to speak. That calm first came with the book *Human, All Too Human*, which this second preface and defence is written for. Since it is a book for "free thinkers," it shows a bit of the almost cheerful and curious coldness of the student of the mind. Such a person has many painful things *behind* him, and he keeps them *beneath* him. What's more, he pins them down for himself and fixes

them in place, the way a collector pins an insect with a needle. Is it any wonder that in such sharp, delicate work, blood flows now and then? Is it any wonder that the student of the mind has blood on his fingers, and not *only* on his fingers?

**2.**

The *Miscellaneous Maxims and Opinions*, like *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, were first published on their own. They came out as follow-ups and add-ons to the book I just mentioned, the human, all too human *Book for Free Thinkers*. At the same time, they were a follow-up and a strengthening of a cure for my mind. That cure was a treatment I gave myself against romantic thinking. My instinct, which had always stayed healthy, found and prescribed this treatment all by itself, against a passing attack of the most dangerous kind of romantic sickness. Now, after six years of getting well, I think I may be allowed to gather these same writings together and publish them as a second volume of *Human, All Too Human*. Perhaps, if they are looked at together, they will teach their lesson more clearly and more powerfully. It is a lesson in health. It can be recommended as a training of the will to the more thoughtful young people of the coming generation. The one speaking here is someone with a gloomy outlook who has often jumped out of his own skin but has always come back into it. So he is someone with a gloomy outlook who is friendly toward the gloomy outlook, but in any case, no longer a romantic. And doesn't such a person, who has a snake's trick of shedding his skin, have the right to lecture today's gloomy thinkers, who are all still caught in the trap of romantic thinking? Or at least to show them how it is—done?

**3.**

In fact, it was high time to say goodbye back then, and I soon got proof of it. Richard Wagner seemed to be conquering everything. But

in reality he was only a worn-out, hopeless romantic. And suddenly he fell down, helpless and broken, before the Christian Cross.... Was there not one single German who had eyes to see and a heart to feel for this horrible sight? Was I the only one he made—suffer? Either way, this unexpected event lit up for me, like a flash of lightning, the place I had left behind. It also showed me the horror that everyone feels when they only realize how great a danger was after they have already passed through it. As I went on alone, I shivered, and not long after that I became ill. Or rather, I became something worse than ill—I became weary. I was weary from being let down again and again by everything that was left to make us modern people excited. I was weary at the thought of all the strength, work, hope, youth and love that had been thrown to the winds and wasted. I was weary from disgust at how soft and weak this romanticism was, at its wild, undisciplined gushing, at its whole web of high-minded lies and its way of making the conscience go soft—and here, once again, it had beaten one of the bravest of men. Last, but not least, I was weary from a bitter suspicion I could not shake off: that after this letdown I was fated to distrust more deeply, to look down on things more deeply, and to be alone more deeply than ever before. My life's mission—where had it gone? Did it not look now as if my life's mission were moving away from me, and as if I would have no right to it for a long time to come? What could I do to bear this most terrible loss?—I started by completely forbidding myself all romantic music. That kind of art is two-faced, showy and suffocating. It takes away the mind's toughness and its joy, and it is rich soil in which every sort of vague longing and soggy, sensual feeling can grow. "Beware of music" is still my advice today to everyone who is man enough to hold on to clean, clear thinking. Music like that drains your strength, makes you soft, makes you weak, and its "eternal feminine" pulls us—down!(2) My first suspicion, my very first step to protect myself, was aimed at romantic music. If I hoped for anything at all from music, it was that

some day a musician would come along who was bold, clever, sharp-tongued, southern, and healthy enough to take a revenge on that other music that would last forever.

**4.**

Now I was lonely and full of painful doubt about myself. So I took sides—not without some bitterness—against myself, and for everything that hurt me and was hard on me. In this way I found my way back to that brave gloomy outlook which is the very opposite of all romantic fakery. And, as it seems to me today, it was also the way back to "myself," to my life's mission. There is a hidden, commanding Something inside us. For a long time we have no name for it, until at last it shows itself as our life's mission. That tyrant inside us makes us pay a terrible price for every attempt to run away from it or slip out of its grip. We pay for every time we hold ourselves back too early. We pay for every time we make peace with people we do not belong with. We pay for every activity, no matter how respectable, that pulls us away from our main purpose. Yes, we even pay for every virtue that would like to shield us from the harshness of the responsibility that belongs to us alone. "Illness" is always the answer whenever we want to doubt our right to our own life's mission, whenever we start making things easier for ourselves in any way. How strange and how terrible! It is exactly the things that make life easier for us that we are punished for most harshly! And if we want to get healthy again, we have no other choice—we must load ourselves down even more heavily than we were ever loaded before.

**5.**

It was then that I learned the way a hermit talks, a way of talking that only the most silent people, and those who suffer most, ever pick up. I talked with no one listening, or rather I did not care whether anyone

was listening, just so that I would not suffer from silence. I talked about all sorts of things that had nothing to do with me, but in a way that made it seem as if they did. At that time I also learned the skill of appearing cheerful, fair-minded and curious when faced with everything healthy and wicked. Is this, as it seems to me, what "good taste" means for a sick person? Still, a sharper eye and a more feeling heart will notice what perhaps gives these writings their charm: the person speaking here has suffered and gone without, but speaks as if he had never suffered or gone without at all. Here, balance, calm, and even thankfulness toward life are going to be kept up, no matter what. Here a strict, proud will is in charge, always on guard, always sensitive. It has taken on the job of defending life against pain, and of snapping off all the conclusions that tend to sprout like poisonous mushrooms from pain, disappointment, being fed up, loneliness and other swamps. Maybe this gives our gloomy thinkers a hint to take a look at themselves? Because it was then that I came up with the short saying, "someone who is suffering has no right yet to a gloomy outlook." And it was then that I began a long, patient fight against the unscientific basic ideas of all soft, dreamy gloom, which tries to blow up single, personal experiences and turn them into "general judgments," into verdicts that condemn the whole world. In short, it was then that I caught sight of a new world. Being hopeful in order to heal and win something back, so that some day I would earn the right to be gloomy—do you understand that? A doctor sometimes sends his patient to completely unfamiliar surroundings, to cut him off from his whole "past": his worries, friends, letters, duties, foolish mistakes and painful memories. He teaches him to reach out with his hands and senses toward new food, a new sun, a new future. In the same way, I was both doctor and patient, and I forced myself into a completely different and untested part of the soul. Above all, I forced myself into a gripping journey to a foreign land, a foreign air, into curiosity about everything foreign. A long time of wandering, searching and changing

followed. I disliked staying fixed in any way, and I disliked clumsy yes-saying and no-saying. At the same time, I followed a diet and a discipline meant to make it as easy as possible for the soul to fly high, and above all to keep flying away. In fact, I lived on as little as possible. I freed myself from all the rougher kinds of bodily pleasure. I stayed independent while the world showed me all sorts of signs of disapproval, and I was proud that I could live in the middle of all that disapproval. There was maybe a little cynicism, a little of the "barrel of Diogenes" (the old Greek thinker who lived in a tub), a lot of playful happiness, playful cheer, a lot of calm, light, delicate foolishness, and hidden enthusiasm. In the end, all of this made my spirit much stronger, and brought a growing joy and overflowing health. Life itself rewards us for holding on stubbornly to our will to live. It rewards a long war like the one I fought against the gloomy tiredness of life. It even rewards every watchful, thankful glance we give—glances that do not miss even the smallest, most delicate, most fleeting gifts.... In the end we receive Life's great gifts, maybe the greatest it can give—we get back our life's mission.

**6.**

Should what I went through—the story of an illness and of getting well, because it did end in getting well—be only my own private experience? Should it be just my own personal "Human, All Too Human"? Today I would gladly believe the opposite. I am growing more and more sure that my travel books were not written only for my own good, even though for a while it looked that way. After six years of growing confidence, may I send them out on a journey once more, as a kind of test? May I recommend them especially to the ears and hearts of people who are weighed down by some sort of "past," and who still have enough mind left to suffer from that past in their thinking too? But above all, I would recommend them to you whose

load is the heaviest. You rare and chosen minds, surrounded by more dangers than anyone, the most thoughtful, the bravest. You who must be the conscience of the modern soul, and so must also understand it deeply, like an expert who knows its science. In you is gathered every sickness, poison, or danger that exists today. Your fate says you must be sicker than any single person, because you are not "just single persons." Your comfort is to know the way to a new health—and, ah, to walk that path—a health of tomorrow and the day after. You people of destiny, winning, beating time itself, the healthiest and the strongest: you good Europeans!

**7.**

Let me finally put into one simple formula how I stand against the soft, dreamy gloom of those who hold back from life, the unlucky ones, the beaten ones. Here it is: there is a will that reaches toward the tragic and toward a gloomy outlook, and it is a sign of how tough and how strong a mind is—its taste, its feelings, its conscience. With this will in our hearts, we are not afraid. Instead, we ourselves look closely into the terrible and puzzling parts that belong to all existence. Behind such a will stand courage, pride, and the wish for a truly great enemy. That was my gloomy outlook from the very start. It was a new outlook, I think—an outlook that even today is still new and strange, isn't it? Up to this moment I hold on to it firmly, and (if you will believe me) not only for my own sake, but sometimes against myself too.... You would like me to prove that first? Well, what else does this whole long preface do—but prove it?

Sils-Maria, Upper Engadine, September 1886.

## Part I. Mixed Sayings and Opinions

**1.**

TO THOSE LET DOWN BY PHILOSOPHY.—Until now you believed that life had the highest possible value. Now you feel let down. But does that mean you have to throw life away at once, for the cheapest price you can get?

**2.**

TOO FUSSY.—A person can even become too fussy about having perfectly clear ideas. Then how disgusted they feel when they have to deal with things that are only half-clear, foggy, reaching upward, or full of doubt! All that endless fluttering and straining, without ever managing to fly or to grab hold of anything, seems ridiculous to them, and yet it doesn't make them laugh.

**3.**

THOSE WHO COURT REALITY.—When someone finally sees how long and how completely he has been fooled, he hugs even the ugliest reality just out of spite. That is why, across the long story of the world, the best people have always been the ones who courted reality. After all, the best people have always been the ones fooled the longest and the most completely.

**4.**

HOW FREE THINKING HAS MOVED FORWARD.—There is no better way to show the difference between free thinking in the past and free thinking today than one short saying. It took all the boldness of

the eighteenth century to see this saying and to speak it. And yet, measured by how we see things now, even that saying seems innocent and naive, without knowing it. I mean Voltaire's short saying: "Believe me, my friend, even error has its value."

## 5.

AN INHERITED SIN OF PHILOSOPHERS.—Philosophers have always taken over the sayings of the people who judge human behavior, the students of human nature, and they have spoiled them. They did this by adopting those sayings with no limits at all. They tried to prove as a law of necessity what the students of human nature only meant as a rough hint, or as a truth that fit their own countrymen or their own townspeople for maybe ten years. On top of that, the philosophers believed that by doing this they were lifting themselves above the students of human nature! So you will find that Schopenhauer's famous teachings rest on bits of everyday wisdom first spoken by the students of human nature. I mean his teachings that the will rules over the mind, that a person's character can never change, and that pleasure is only the absence of pain. All of these are mistakes, in the way he understands them. Take the word "will" itself. Schopenhauer bent this word so that it became a shared name for several different human states, and in that way he filled a gap in the language. This helped him a lot, as far as he was a student of human nature, because now he could talk about the will the way Pascal had talked about it. But even in the hands of its creator, Schopenhauer's "will" became a curse for knowledge, because philosophers are crazy about making things general. This will was turned into a poetic image when he claimed that everything in nature has a will. Finally, so that the word could be used for all sorts of confused mysticism, people agreed, dishonestly, to misuse it. So now all our trendy philosophers repeat it. They seem completely sure that all things have a will, and that in fact

everything is One Single Will. Judging by the way this All-One-Will is usually described, believing in it is pretty much like deliberately trying to take the stupid Devil as your God.

**6.**

AGAINST DREAMERS.—The dreamer hides the truth from himself. The liar hides it only from other people.

**7.**

HATRED OF THE LIGHT.—Suppose we make it clear to someone that, strictly speaking, he can never talk about truth, only about how likely something is, and how much more or less likely. Usually our student is openly delighted by this. From that joy we learn how much people prefer the edges of their thinking to stay blurry, and how deep down in their hearts they hate truth because it is so fixed and exact.—Why is that? Is it because everyone secretly fears that one day the light of truth might shine too brightly on themselves? Is it because they want to seem important, and so they hide from the world what they really are? Or does it come from their horror of light that is far too bright? Their souls are used to twilight. They are easily dazzled, like bats. So they simply have to hate it.

**8.**

CHRISTIAN DOUBT.—Pilate asked, "What is truth?" Now people happily bring him onto the stage as if he were a lawyer defending Christ. They do this to make everything we know, or could know, look like mere appearance. Then they set up the Cross against a terrifying backdrop: the idea that knowing anything is impossible.

## 9.

"LAWS OF NATURE": A SUPERSTITIOUS PHRASE.—When you talk so happily about Nature acting according to law, you must be assuming one of two things. Either you think that everything in Nature follows its law because it chooses to obey, by its own decision. In that case, what you admire is Nature's good morals. Or you are charmed by the idea of a creator who is a kind of engineer, who built a very clever watch with human beings as extra decorations.—So with the phrase "following the law," plain necessity starts to seem more human. In the end it becomes a hiding place, a last safe corner, for daydreams that are really myths.

## 10.

NOW HANDED OVER TO HISTORY.—All foggy philosophers who darken the world, in other words all thinkers about the beyond, whether crude or refined, get eye pain, ear pain and toothache when they start to suspect that this saying might be true: "From now on, all philosophy has been handed over to history." Since they are in such pain, we can forgive them for throwing stones and dirt at anyone who says this. But because of that, the teaching itself may get dirty and look disgraceful for a while, and it may lose some of its power.

## 11.

THE GLOOMY THINKER ABOUT THE MIND.—Someone whose mind is truly free will also think freely about the mind itself. He will not close his eyes to some terrible facts about where the mind comes from and where it tends to go. Because of this, other people may call him the bitterest enemy of free thought. They may give him that awful insulting name, "the gloomy thinker about the mind." That is be-

cause people are used to labeling a man not by his strength, his greatest virtue, but by the quality that is most foreign to his nature.

**12.**

THE BACKPACK OF THE THINKERS ABOUT THE BEYOND.—Some people boast loudly about the scientific basis of their ideas about the beyond. It is best not to answer them at all. It is enough to tug at the bundle they keep hidden, a little shyly, behind their backs. If you manage to lift it, the results of that "scientific basis" come out into the light, and they are very embarrassed: a sweet little "God," a polite, respectable life after death, maybe a bit of talking with spirits, and in any case a tangled heap of poor-sinner misery and self-righteous arrogance.

**13.**

KNOWLEDGE IS SOMETIMES HARMFUL.—Searching for knowledge without any limits is proven useful again and again, in a hundred different ways. Because of that, we must remember to count in the price as well: the quieter, rarer harm that some individuals have to suffer because of it. A chemist cannot avoid sometimes being poisoned or burned during his experiments. What is true for the chemist is true for our whole culture. And this, we might add, clearly shows that knowledge should carry its own healing cream for burns, and should always keep antidotes ready for poisons.

**14.**

WHAT THE SMUG CONFORMIST CRAVES.—The smug conformist thinks his most urgent need is a fancy colorful patch, or a turban, made of ideas about the beyond, and he will not let go of it. Yet he would look less silly without this decoration.

**15.**

ENTHUSIASTS.—Everything that enthusiasts say in favor of their gospel or their master is really a way of defending themselves. They may act as if they were the judges and not the ones on trial, but they are defending themselves all the same. This is because, almost every moment, they are reminded without wanting to be that they are exceptions, and that they have to prove they have a right to exist.

**16.**

WHAT IS GOOD TEMPTS US TO LIVE.—All good things, even good books that are written against life, are powerful ways of drawing us toward life.

**17.**

THE HAPPINESS OF THE HISTORIAN.—"When we hear the hair-splitting thinkers about the beyond and the prophets of the world beyond speak, the rest of us do feel that we are the 'poor in spirit.' But ours is the heavenly kingdom of change, with spring and autumn, summer and winter. Theirs is the world beyond, with its gray, endless frost and shadows." This is what a man said to himself as he walked in the morning sunshine. He was a man who, in his study of history, had again and again changed not only his mind but also his heart. Unlike the thinkers about the beyond, he is happy to carry inside himself not one "immortal soul" but many souls that are *mortal*.

**18.**

THREE KINDS OF THINKERS.—There are mineral springs that gush, springs that flow, and springs that only trickle. In the same way, there are three kinds of thinkers. An ordinary person judges them by

how much water comes out. An expert judges them by what is in the water—in other words, by the things in it that are not water.

**19.**

THE PICTURE OF LIFE.—Poets and philosophers have often tried to paint a picture of life itself. But it makes no sense to try. Even the greatest artists and thinkers have only managed to make large and small pictures of one single life—their own. And really, nothing else is possible. Something that is still growing and changing cannot show itself, while it is changing, as something fixed and lasting, as a *definite object*.

**20.**

TRUTH WILL HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE IT.—Believing in truth starts with doubting all the truths you used to believe in.

**21.**

WHERE WE ARE EXPECTED TO KEEP QUIET.—Suppose we describe free thinking as a very dangerous journey across glaciers and frozen seas. Then the people who don't want to travel that path get offended, as if we had accused them of being cowards with weak knees. Anything hard that they feel is beyond their strength must not even be mentioned in front of them.

**22.**

*History in a Nutshell.*—The most serious joke-version I have ever heard was this: "In the beginning was the nonsense, and the nonsense was with God, and the nonsense was God."(4)

**23.**

CANNOT BE CURED.—The idealist can never be changed. If he is thrown out of his Heaven, he makes himself a fitting ideal out of Hell. Take away his illusions, and look! He will hug his disappointment just as eagerly as he hugged his hope a little while ago. His urge is one of the great urges in human nature that can never be cured. Because of this, he can cause tragic fates for others, and later become the subject of a tragedy himself—the kind of tragedy that deals with what can't be cured, can't be softened, and can't be escaped in the fate and character of human beings.

**24.**

APPLAUSE AS PART OF THE SHOW.—Shining eyes and a friendly smile are the applause we give to the whole great comedy of the world and of existence. But this applause is itself a comedy inside the comedy. Its purpose is to tempt the other people watching to join in and cry, *"Clap, friends!"*

**25.**

THE COURAGE TO BE BORING.—Anyone who does not have the courage to let himself and his work be thought boring is surely not a mind of the highest rank, whether in the arts or in the sciences.—A mocker, who for once happened to be a thinker too, might add, looking at the world and at history: "God did not have this courage. He wanted to make everything so interesting, and so he did."

**26.**

FROM THE THINKER'S MOST PRIVATE EXPERIENCE.—Nothing is harder for a person than to think about something impersonally. I mean, to see it as a thing and not as a person. You might even ask

whether he can switch off, for one single moment, his built-in instinct to create and shape a personality. After all, he treats his thoughts, however abstract they are, as if they were people. He has to fight against some of them or attach himself to them, and he has to protect them, support them and feed them. Let us watch or listen to ourselves at the moment we hear or discover a new idea. Maybe we dislike it because it seems so bold and so bossy. Without noticing, we ask ourselves whether we could set an opposing idea next to it as an enemy, or tack on a "perhaps" or a "sometimes." Even the tiny word "probably" makes us feel satisfied, because it breaks the heavy tyranny of anything that claims to be absolute. If, on the other hand, the new idea comes in looking gentle, sweetly patient and humble, and it falls straight into the arms of whoever disagrees with it, then we test our power in a different way. Can't we come to the help of this weak little creature? Can't we pet it and feed it, and give it strength and fullness, and truth, and even make it absolute? Can we act like a parent, or a knight, or a kind friend toward our idea?—Then again, we see one judgment here and another judgment there. They are separated from each other, and they never look at each other or move toward each other. So we are tempted by the thought of whether we could play matchmaker here and draw a *conclusion*. We look forward to the idea that if something follows from this conclusion, it is not only the two judgments joined in marriage that will be honored, but the matchmakers as well. But suppose we cannot get a grip on that thought, either by fighting it and disliking it, or by being kind to it (if we believe it is true). Then we give in to it and bow to it as our leader and our prince. We give it a seat of honor, and we never mention it without a fanfare of trumpets, because we shine in its light. Too bad for anyone who tries to dim that light! Perhaps one day we ourselves start to distrust our idea. Then we, the tireless "king-makers" in the history of the mind, knock it off its throne and right away lift up its

rival. Surely, if you think about this and think it through a bit further, no one will go on talking about an “absolute drive to know”!

So why does a person prefer what is true over what is untrue? Why does he do this in his secret fight with thoughts that act like persons, in all the hidden ways he handles thoughts: matching them up like a matchmaker, setting up rules for them like founding a nation, raising them like children, caring for them and giving them charity? He does it for the same reason he is honest when he deals with real people. Today he does it out of habit, out of what he has inherited, and out of training. But at the start, he did it because the truth, like what is beautiful and what is fair, is more useful and earns more respect than what is untrue. In the world of thought, it is hard to claim power and glory that rest on a mistake or a lie. The feeling that such a building might fall down someday hurts the pride of the person who built it. He is ashamed that his building material is so weak. And since he thinks he matters more than the rest of the world, he would like to build nothing that lasts less long than the rest of the world. In his longing for truth, he grabs hold of the belief that he himself will live forever. This is the proudest and most defiant idea there is. It is closely tied to the thought hiding underneath it, which in Latin goes: "Let the world perish, as long as I am saved!" His work has turned into his own self. He changes himself into something that can never die, something that challenges everything. It is his endless pride that makes him use only the best and hardest stones for his building—that is, truths, or what he believes are truths. People have always been right to call arrogance "the fault of the wise man." Yet without this fault, which pushes people into action, Truth and her place on earth would be in serious danger. We tend to fear our own thoughts, ideas and words, and yet we also honor ourselves through them. Without knowing it, we give them the power to reward us, look down on us, praise us and blame us. So we treat them as if they were free persons

of the mind, as independent powers, as our equals. Here lie the roots of the remarkable thing that I have called "honesty of the mind." So something of the highest moral kind has grown like a flower from a black root.

**27.**

THOSE WHO KEEP PEOPLE IN THE DARK.—The main point of the dark magic of keeping people in the dark is not that it wants to fog up the brain. Its real aim is to darken our picture of the world and to cloud our idea of what life is. It often does this by blocking every kind of light that could reach the mind. But sometimes it uses the exact opposite method. It tries to use the most refined and clever thinking to make people sick and tired of what thinking produces. Thinkers about the beyond who split hairs are excellent tools for this subtler way of keeping people in the dark. They open the road to doubting everything, and because they are far too sharp, they make people distrust sharpness itself.—Could even Kant be used for this purpose? Did he perhaps even mean to do something like this, at least for a while? You might think so from his own well-known statement: "to make room for belief by putting limits on knowledge."—He certainly did not succeed. Neither did his followers, who went sneaking along like wolves and foxes on the trail of this very refined and dangerous way of keeping people in the dark. It is the most dangerous kind of all, because here the dark magic shows up dressed in the clothes of light.

**28.**

WHAT KIND OF PHILOSOPHY SPOILS ART.—Imagine a philosophy full of mystery and talk about the beyond, which spreads a fog over everything to do with beauty and art, so that you can no longer see into it. When that happens, these works of art can no longer be meas-

ured against each other, because each one on its own becomes impossible to explain. And once they can no longer be compared in order to judge their worth, people stop judging altogether and just accept everything blindly. From this comes a steady shrinking of the enjoyment of art. That enjoyment is the only thing that separates art from simply satisfying a crude need, and it depends on the most refined taste and judgment. The more taste shrinks, the more the desire for art changes and slides back into a common, crude hunger. From then on, the artist tries to feed that hunger with rougher and rougher food.

**29.**

ON GETHSEMANE.—The most painful thing a thinker can say to artists is the line Jesus spoke to his sleeping friends: "Could you not stay awake with me for one hour?"

**30.**

AT THE LOOM.—There are many people, such as artists and women, who work against the few who enjoy untying the knot of things and pulling apart the threads they are woven from. The many always want to weave the threads back together and tangle them up again. In this way they turn what has been understood back into something not understood, and, if they can, into something that cannot be understood at all. Whatever comes out of it, the threads and the knot always look rather messy, because too many hands are working at them and pulling on them.

**31.**

IN THE DESERT OF SCIENCE.—The scientist goes on his modest, hard journeys, which are often enough like trips through a desert. On

the way, he sees those dazzling mirages that are called "philosophical systems." With a magical power to fool him, they show him that the answer to every riddle, and the most refreshing drink of the true water of life, are close by. His tired heart is glad. He almost touches with his lips the goal of all his patient and hard scientific work, so that he hurries forward almost without thinking. Other people stand still, as if put under a spell by the beautiful illusion. The desert swallows them up, and science loses them. Still other people have often felt these comforts that exist only in their own minds. They become very discouraged and curse the salty taste that these mirages leave in the mouth. That taste causes a wild thirst—and yet they have not come one step closer to any kind of spring.

**32.**

THE SO-CALLED "REAL REALITY."—When a poet describes different kinds of work—like the work of a soldier, a silk-weaver, or a sailor—he pretends to know all about these things, as if he were an expert. Even when he explains what people do and what happens to them in life, he acts as if he had been there when the whole web of life was being spun. To that extent, he is a fake. He plays his tricks on people who know nothing at all about these things, and that is why he gets away with it. They praise him for his deep, true knowledge. In the end, they lead him to the false belief that he really knows as much as the individual experts and makers do—yes, even as much as the great powers who spin the world itself. At last the fake becomes honest, and truly believes that he is sincere. People who live by their feelings tell him to his face that he has a "higher" truth and honesty. They say this because, for the moment, they are tired of real life, and they take the poet's dream as a pleasant break, like a good night's sleep for the head and the heart. The pictures in this dream now seem worth more to them, because, as we said, they find them more helpful. And

people have always believed that whatever seems worth more must be more true and more real. The poets know they have this power. So they set out on purpose to run down everything that people usually call reality. They twist it until it looks uncertain, unreal, fake, unclean, sinful, sad, and full of lies. They use every doubt about how far human knowledge can reach, and every extreme kind of doubting, to spread a crumpled veil of uncertainty over everything. They want this, because once everything has been darkened, their magic tricks and their spells on the soul can be accepted without a second thought as the road to "true truth" and "real reality."

**33.**

THE WISH TO BE JUST AND THE WISH TO BE A JUDGE.—Schopenhauer had a deep understanding of what is human and all too human, and a fresh, original feel for facts. But both were spoiled quite a bit by the bright leopard-skin of his ideas about the beyond. In other words, his flashy theories covered up his real gift: you must first pull that skin off him if you want to find the real genius for studying human nature underneath. This Schopenhauer makes a wonderful distinction, and in it he comes much closer to the truth than he himself would dare to admit. He says: "Seeing that human actions follow from strict necessity is the line that separates philosophical minds from all other minds." But he worked against this wonderful insight, which he sometimes reached, because of a prejudice. It was a prejudice he shared with the ordinary moral person (not with the student of human nature). He states it quite innocently and piously, like this: "The final and true explanation of the inner nature of all things must, by necessity, be closely tied to the explanation of the moral meaning of human actions." But this tie is not "necessary" at all. In fact, such a tie must be thrown out because of that very principle: that human actions follow from strict necessity. This means that the will is com-

pletely unfree and not responsible. So philosophical minds will be set apart from other minds by the fact that they do not believe morality has any meaning beyond this world. This must open up a gap between the two kinds of minds. This gap is so deep and so impossible to cross that the much-complained-about gap between "educated" and "uneducated" people hardly gives you any idea of it. It is true that many back doors, which "philosophical minds" like Schopenhauer's left open for themselves, must be seen as useless. None of them leads outside, into the fresh air of free will. Every door that people had slipped through until now showed, once again, the shining brass wall of fate behind it. For we are in a prison, and we can only dream of freedom, not make ourselves free. That people cannot fight off this truth much longer can be seen in the desperate, unbelievable poses and faces made by those who still push against it and keep wrestling with it. Their attitude right now goes something like this: "So no one is responsible for what he does? And yet everything is full of guilt and the feeling of guilt? But someone *must* be the sinner. If we can no longer, or may no longer, blame and sentence the single person —that one poor wave tossed about in the unavoidable rough rolling of the waves of change—well, then, let this stormy sea, this process of change itself, be the sinner. Here is free will: this whole can be blamed and sentenced, it can make up for wrongs and pay for them. *So let God be the sinner, and let man be the one who saves him.* Let the history of the world be guilt, paying for guilt, and suicide. Let the wrongdoer be his own judge, and the judge his own executioner." This is Christianity stretched to its very limit—for what else is it? It is the final stab in the sword fight between two teachings: the teaching that morality is absolute, and the teaching that we are absolutely unfree. It would be truly horrible if it were anything more than a pose of logic, an ugly grimace of the thought underneath. Perhaps it is the dying spasm of a heart that looks for a cure in its despair, a heart to which madness whispers: "Look, you are the lamb who takes away the sin of

God." The mistake is not only in the feeling "I am responsible." It is just as much in the contradiction "I am not responsible, but someone must be." That is simply not true. So the philosopher must say, like Christ, "Do not judge." And the final difference between philosophical minds and the others would be this: the first want to be just, and the others want to be judges.

**34.**

Sacrifice. You believe that sacrifice is the mark of a moral action? Then just think about this: in every action that is done on purpose, whether it is the best action or the worst, isn't there always some kind of sacrifice?

**35.**

AGAINST THE MORAL "HEART-SEARCHERS." Before you can judge how strong a person's moral nature is, and how strong it could become, you would have to know the best and the worst that person is capable of, both in thought and in action. But that is a test nobody can ever actually carry out.

**36.**

A SNAKE'S BITE. We cannot know whether we have a snake's poisonous bite in us until someone has stepped on our neck. A wife or a mother might put it this way: until someone has stepped on the neck of the one we love most, our child. Our character is shaped more by the things that have never happened to us than by the things we have actually lived through.

**37.**

FOOLING OURSELVES IN LOVE. We forget a lot of our past, and we push much of it out of our minds on purpose. In other words, we want the picture of ourselves that shines back at us from the past to lie about us and flatter our vanity. We are fooling ourselves like this all the time. And what about you people who talk and brag so much about "forgetting yourself in love" and "losing yourself in the other person"? Do you think that is something different? So you smash the mirror, throw yourselves into another person you admire, and then enjoy the new portrait of yourself, only you call it by the other person's name. And all this is not supposed to count as fooling yourself, as selfishness, you amazing creatures? It seems to me that people who hide part of themselves from themselves, and people who hide their whole selves from themselves, are both doing the same thing: stealing from the treasure house of knowledge. So now it is clear what kind of wrongdoing the saying "Know yourself" is warning us against.

**38.**

TO THE PERSON WHO DENIES HIS VANITY. Someone who denies that he is vain usually has vanity in such a crude and brutal form that he shuts his eyes to it by instinct, so that he won't have to despise himself.

**39.**

WHY STUPID PEOPLE SO OFTEN TURN NASTY. When our opponent makes arguments that our head is too weak to answer, our heart answers instead, by casting suspicion on his reasons for making them.

**40.**

THE ART OF MORAL EXCEPTIONS. There is a kind of art that points out and celebrates the unusual cases in morality, where good turns into bad and the unjust becomes just. We should rarely listen to it. It is like buying something from traveling peddlers now and then: we are always afraid they are slipping much more into their own pockets than their fair profit from the sale.

**41.**

ENJOYING POISON AND NOT ENJOYING IT. The one argument that has always really stopped people from drinking poison is not that it kills, but that it tastes bad.

**42.**

A WORLD WITHOUT A SENSE OF SIN. If people only did the kinds of things that don't give them a guilty conscience, the human world would still look bad and dishonest enough, but it would not look as sickly and pitiful as it does now. There have always been plenty of wicked people with no conscience at all, and many good, honest people never feel the pleasure of having a clear conscience.

**43.**

THE CONSCIENTIOUS. It is easier to follow your conscience than your intelligence, because every time you fail, your conscience finds an excuse and some encouragement within itself. That is why there are so many conscientious people and so few intelligent ones.

**44.**

OPPOSITE WAYS OF AVOIDING BITTERNESS. One kind of person finds it helpful to let out disgust in words, and becomes sweeter by talking it out. Another kind of person only becomes fully bitter by speaking out. For that kind, it is wiser to have to swallow something. When people like this hold themselves back in front of enemies and bosses, it improves their character and keeps it from turning too harsh and sour.

**45.**

DON'T GET TOO DISCOURAGED. Getting bedsores is unpleasant, but it doesn't prove that the treatment telling you to stay in bed is a bad one. People who have spent a long time living outside themselves, and who have finally turned to an inner, thoughtful life of philosophy, know that you can also get sores in your character and your mind. Again, this is mostly no argument against the way of life they have chosen. It just means allowing a few small exceptions and what look like setbacks.

**46.**

THE HUMAN "THING IN ITSELF." The thing that is easiest to hurt and yet hardest to defeat is human vanity. In fact, being wounded makes it stronger, and it can grow to giant size.

**47.**

THE COMEDY OF MANY HARD-WORKING PEOPLE. By working far too hard, they earn themselves free time, and then they can do nothing with it except count the hours until the story is over.

## 48.

HAVING JOY IN PLENTY. Someone who is overflowing with joy must be a good person. But maybe he isn't the cleverest person, even though he has reached the very goal that the cleverest person is chasing with all his cleverness.

## 49.

IN THE MIRROR OF NATURE. Haven't we described a man pretty well when we are told these things about him? That he likes to walk between tall fields of golden grain. That he prefers the colors of the forest and the flowers in dry, chilly autumn to all other colors, because they hint at something more beautiful than Nature has ever managed to create. That he feels as much at home under big, broad-leaved walnut trees as he does among his closest family. That in the mountains his greatest joy is to come across those tiny, faraway lakes, from which it seems that loneliness itself is looking back at him with its own eyes. That he loves the gray calm of misty twilight that creeps along the windows on autumn and early winter evenings and shuts out all lifeless noise, as if with velvet curtains. That in rough, uncut stones he sees the last remaining traces of the very earliest age of the world, still eager to speak, and that he has respected them ever since he was a child. And finally, that the sea, with its shifting snake-like skin and its wild-animal beauty, is and always will be strange to him. Yes, this does describe something of the man. But the mirror of Nature does not tell us that this same man, with all his gentle love of country scenes, and not even "in spite of" them, might also be unpleasant, stingy, and full of himself. Horace, who was a good judge of these things, wrote a famous poem that begins "Happy is the man who lives far from business," and he put the most tender feelings for country life into the mouth of a Roman moneylender.

## 50.

POWER WITHOUT VICTORY. The strongest piece of knowledge we have, that the human will is not free at all, is also the one that has achieved the least. That is because it has always had the most powerful enemy of all: human vanity.

## 51.

PLEASURE AND MISTAKE. One person does good to his friends without meaning to, just through what he is like. Another does good on purpose, through separate actions. Although the first kind of nature is thought to be the higher one, only the second kind comes with a good conscience and pleasure. That is the pleasure of feeling justified by good deeds, and it rests on the belief that we choose by our own will to do good or evil. In other words, it rests on a mistake.

## 52.

HOW FOOLISH IT IS TO DO WRONG.—The wrong we have done ourselves is much harder to live with than the wrong others have done to us. (And notice, this is not always for moral reasons.) In the end, the one who does wrong is always the one who suffers. That is true, at least, if he is able to feel the sting of a guilty conscience, or to see that by what he did he has turned society against himself and cut himself off from it. So, for the sake of our own inner happiness, we should be even more careful about doing wrong than about having wrong done to us. We should do this so that we don't lose our sense of well-being, quite apart from what religion and morals tell us. Because when we are the ones wronged, we have comforts: a clear conscience, hope, and the chance of revenge. On top of that, we have the sympathy and praise of fair-minded people, and even of all of society, which is afraid of the wrongdoer. Quite a few people are

skilled at a dirty kind of self-deception. It lets them turn every wrong they have done into a wrong that someone else did to them. And it lets them keep for their own actions the special right to say, "I was only defending myself." Their aim, of course, is to make their own burden lighter.

**53.**

ENVY THAT SPEAKS UP AND ENVY THAT DOESN'T.—Ordinary envy usually cackles when the envied hen has laid an egg. In other words, it complains out loud when someone else succeeds, and by doing so it lets off steam and calms down. But there is a deeper kind of envy that goes dead silent at such a moment. It wishes every mouth would be shut, so that no one talks about the success at all. And it gets angrier and angrier because this wish never comes true. Silent envy grows in silence.

**54.**

ANGER AS A SPY.—Anger empties the soul and drags up even the muck at the very bottom of it. So, if we have no other way of finding out for sure, we must know how to make the people who depend on us, and the people who oppose us, angry. That way we learn what they are really doing and thinking against us.

**55.**

DEFENDING IS MORALLY HARDER THAN ATTACKING.—The truly heroic act, the masterpiece of a good person, is not attacking someone's opinions while still loving the people who hold them. It is something much harder: defending his own position without hurting his opponent with bitter, burning resentment, and without even wanting to. The sword used for attack is honest and broad. The sword

used for defence usually narrows down to a sharp needle point. That is, defending ourselves tempts us to become sneaky and stinging.

**56.**

HONEST ABOUT HONESTY.—Someone who is openly honest with himself ends up rather proud of this honesty. He knows only too well why he is honest. It is for the same reason that another person prefers putting on a show and being a hypocrite.

**57.**

COALS OF FIRE.—The old saying talks about heaping coals of fire on someone's head, meaning paying back their bad deed with kindness to shame them. This usually gets misunderstood and falls flat. That is because the other person knows he is just as much in the right, and he too has been thinking of collecting coals to heap on our head.

**58.**

DANGEROUS BOOKS.—A man says, "Going by my own experience, I find this book harmful." Let him just wait. Maybe one day he will admit that the book did him a great favour, by pushing his soul's hidden sickness out into the open where he could see it. Changing our opinions does not change a person's character at all, or only very little. But it does shine light on certain sides of his personality. Under a different set of opinions, those sides had stayed dark and impossible to recognise.

**59.**

FAKE PITY.—We fake pity when we want to show that we are above feeling hostile toward someone. But usually it doesn't work. And

when the other person notices this, it only makes that hostile feeling a good deal stronger.

**60.**

OPEN DISAGREEMENT OFTEN MAKES PEACE.—When a man openly says that he disagrees with a famous party leader, everyone thinks he must be angry with that leader. Sometimes, though, he is just about to stop being angry with him. He dares to put himself on the same level as his opponent, and so he is freed from the torture of envy that he has been holding in.

**61.**

SEEING OUR OWN LIGHT SHINE.—Even in our darkest hour of sadness, sickness and guilt, we are still glad to see others taking light from us, using us the way the moon is used, as something that reflects light. By this roundabout path, we get back some light from our own power to give it.

**62.**

SHARING OTHERS' JOY.(5)—The snake that bites us means to hurt us, and it enjoys doing so. Even the lowest animal can imagine the pain of others. But to imagine the joy of others, and to be glad about it, is the highest privilege of the highest animals. And even among them, only the finest examples have it. So it is a rare "human thing." That is why there have been philosophers who said that sharing others' joy does not exist.

**63.**

Pregnant After the Fact.—People who have managed to produce works and deeds somehow become, in a mysterious way they don't

understand, all the more pregnant with them afterwards. It is as if they wanted to prove, after the fact, that these works are really their own children and not the children of chance.

**64.**

HARD-HEARTED OUT OF VANITY.—Justice is very often just a cover for weakness. In the same way, men who are fairly clever but weak sometimes put on an act out of ambition. On purpose, they show themselves as unfair and harsh, so that they will leave behind the impression that they are strong.

**65.**

HUMILIATION.—If we find a single grain of humiliation in a big sack of gain, we still pull a sour face, even at our good luck.

**66.**

HEROSTRATUS TAKEN TO THE EXTREME.(6)—Herostratus was a man who burned down a famous temple just to make his name known. There might be people like him who set fire to their own temple, the very one where statues of themselves are honoured.

**67.**

A WORLD OF LITTLE PET NAMES.—Everything that is weak and needs help tugs at our heart. Because of this, we get into the habit of calling everything that tugs at our heart by little, soft, cuddly names. And in doing so, we actually make those things weak and clinging in our imagination.

**68.**

THE BAD SIDE OF SYMPATHY.—Sympathy comes with a strange kind of cheekiness as its companion. Because it wants to help no matter what, sympathy is never unsure, either about how to help or about what the illness is and what caused it. It boldly keeps handing out all its fake remedies, to bring back the patient's health and good name.

**69.**

PUSHINESS.—People can even be pushy with works of art and writing. Getting cosy and over-familiar, from early youth, with the great works of all times shows a complete lack of shame. Others are only pushy out of ignorance, because they don't know whom they are dealing with. One example is classical scholars, young and old, in the way they treat the works of the Greeks.

**70.**

THE WILL IS ASHAMED OF THE MIND.—When we are calm, we make sensible plans to keep our passions under control. But here we often make a very serious mistake. When the time comes to carry out the plan, we feel ashamed of how cold and calculating we were when we made it. So we do exactly the unreasonable thing instead, out of that defiant kind of big-heartedness that comes with every passion.

**71.**

WHY DOUBTERS UPSET MORALITY.—A person who takes his morality in a solemn, serious way gets angry at people who doubt things in the area of morals. That is because, where he pours out all his strength, he wants others to admire it, not to look into it and question it. Then there are people whose very last scrap of morality is

simply their belief in morals. They act the same way toward doubters, maybe with even more passion.

**72.**

SHYNESS.—All students of human nature are shy. They know that as soon as people notice what they like to do, they get mixed up with spies and traitors. On top of that, they usually know they are weak when it comes to action. Even in the middle of their work, they are busy looking at the reasons behind what they are doing, and that almost pulls their attention away from the work itself.

**73.**

A DANGER TO MORALITY FOR EVERYONE.—People who are both noble and honest end up treating as holy any wicked thing that shows off their honesty. For a while, they set aside the balance of their moral judgment.

**74.**

THE SADDEST MISTAKE.—It is something you can never forgive: finding out that where you were sure you were loved, you are really seen only as a household tool and a decoration. You are just something the master of the house uses to show off his vanity in front of his guests.

**75.**

LOVE AND BEING TWO.—What is love, other than understanding another person, and being glad, that they live, work, and feel in a way that is different from ours, even opposite to ours? If love is going to build a bridge across these differences with joy, we must not remove the differences or pretend they are not there. Even loving yourself

assumes that one person holds two sides (or many sides) that can never fully agree.

**76.**

SIGNS FROM DREAMS.—Sometimes, when we are awake, we do not clearly know or feel whether our conscience is clear or guilty about a certain person. Dreams show us this completely and without any doubt.

**77.**

WILD LIVING.—It is not joy but the lack of joy that gives birth to wild, reckless living.

**78.**

REWARD AND PUNISHMENT.—Nobody blames anyone without some hidden idea of punishment and revenge, even when they blame their fate or themselves. Every complaint is a kind of blaming, and every time we pat ourselves on the back, it is a kind of praise. Whichever one we do, we are always making someone responsible.

**79.**

UNFAIR TWICE OVER.—Sometimes we move the truth forward through a double unfairness. This happens when we look at the two sides of a matter one after the other, because we cannot see them both at once. But each time, we misjudge or deny the other side, imagining that what we see right now is the whole truth.

**80.**

DISTRUST.—Distrusting yourself does not always move along in an unsure, shy way. Sometimes it rushes ahead in a wild rage, having worked itself up into a frenzy just so it will not tremble.

**81.**

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SHOW-OFF NEWCOMERS.—If you want to be a somebody, you even have to treat your own shadow with respect.

**82.**

KNOWING HOW TO WASH YOURSELF CLEAN.—We have to know how to come out of dirty situations cleaner than we went in. And if we have to, we must know how to wash ourselves even with dirty water.

**83.**

LETTING YOURSELF GO.—The more you let yourself go, the less other people let you go.

**84.**

THE INNOCENT CROOK.—There is a slow, step-by-step road to every kind of wrongdoing and dishonesty. In the end, the person walking that road is completely left alone by the stinging swarms of a guilty conscience, like insects that have finally flown away. And even though he is now a total scoundrel, he walks along feeling innocent.

**85.**

MAKING PLANS.—Making plans and dreaming up projects brings a lot of pleasant feelings. Someone who had the strength to do nothing

but make plans his whole life would be a happy man. But now and then you have to take a break from this by actually carrying out a plan. And then comes anger and cold, sober reality.

**86.**

WHAT WE SEE THE IDEAL WITH.—Every skilled, capable person is boxed in by his own skill. It is like a prison, and he cannot look out of it freely. If he did not also have a good share of flaws, his good qualities would keep him from ever reaching freedom of the mind or of morals. Our weaknesses are the eyes we use to see the ideal.

**87.**

DISHONEST PRAISE.—Dishonest praise gives us many more pangs of conscience than dishonest criticism. This is probably only because, by praising too much, we have shown off our ability to judge far more fully, and exposed it more, than by criticizing too much and unfairly.

**88.**

HOW SOMEONE DIES DOES NOT MATTER.—The whole way a person thinks about death while he is in the best years of his life and full of strength says a lot about what we call his character. But the hour of death itself, and how he behaves on his deathbed, hardly matter at all. Think of the exhaustion as life fades, especially when old people die. Think of how the brain gets too little food, or gets it unevenly, in this final stretch. Think of the pain, which is sometimes fierce, and how new and strange the whole situation is. And far too often there are waves of superstitious feelings and fears, coming and going, as if dying were a huge deal and meant crossing the most terrifying kind of bridge. All of this means we cannot use death as evidence about how a person lived. And it is not true that a dying person

is usually more honest than a living one. Quite the opposite. Because the people around the bed act so solemnly, and because of all the tears and feelings, some held back and some pouring out, everyone gets drawn into a little play of vanity, sometimes knowingly and sometimes not. For many a poor, looked-down-on wretch, the serious way every dying person is treated must have been the greatest joy of his whole life, a kind of payback and reward for everything he had to go without.

## 89.

MORALITY AND ITS SACRIFICE.—Morality can be traced back to two ideas: "The group is worth more than the single person," and "What lasts should be chosen over what is only for now." From these, people conclude that the lasting good of the group must always, without exception, be placed above the short-term good of the single person. This means above his happiness in the moment, but also above his long-term good, and even above his chance to go on living. Even if the single person suffers from a setup that suits the masses, even if it crushes him and ruins him, morality must be kept, and the victim must be led to the sacrifice. But this way of thinking only shows up in people who are *not* the victims. For the victim, it points the other way: it backs up the claim that one person might be worth more than the many, and that the joy of the present, the "moment in paradise,"(7) should maybe count for more than a dull string of calm or comfortable days. But the victim's philosophy always speaks up too late. So victory stays with morals and morality. And these are really nothing more than a feeling for the whole set of morals you live under and were raised in—raised not as a single person, but as part of the whole, as just a number in a majority. That is why it keeps happening that a single person turns himself into a majority by means of his morality.

## 90.

GOOD THINGS AND A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.—Do you believe that every good thing has always had a clear conscience? Look at science. It is surely a very good thing. Yet it came into the world without a clear conscience, and with no grand feelings or big speeches. It came in secretly, by side roads, like a sinner hiding its face behind a hood or a mask. It always felt, at the very least, like a smuggler. A clear conscience does not start out as the opposite of a guilty conscience. It grows out of it, using it as a stepping-stone. That is because everything good was once new. And because it was new, it seemed strange, against the accepted customs, even wicked. It ate away like a worm at the heart of the lucky person who first discovered it.

## 91.

SUCCESS MAKES THE REASONS HOLY.—We should not be afraid to walk the road toward a virtue, even when we can plainly see what is pushing us along. It may be nothing but selfishness, and so it may be what is useful to us, our own comfort, fear, our health, our good name, or our glory. People call these reasons low and selfish. Fine. But if they push us toward some virtue, such as giving things up, doing our duty, keeping order, saving money, keeping balance, and not going too far, then let us listen to them, whatever names people give them! Because once we reach the goal they are calling us to, the virtue we have gained changes us. It lets us breathe clean air and gives our mind a sense of well-being, and this makes the deeper reasons behind our actions nobler. After that, we no longer do those things for the same crude reasons that got us started.—So education should push virtues onto the student as much as it can, in a way that fits the student's nature. Then virtue, which is like sunshine and warm summer air for the soul, can do its own part of the work and make the person gentler and sweeter.

**92.**

PEOPLE WHO PLAY AT BEING CHRISTIAN, BUT ARE NOT CHRISTIANS.—So this is your Christianity!—When you want to insult human beings, you praise "God and His Saints." And when you want to praise human beings, you go so far that God and His Saints are bound to be insulted.—Since your heart has so little Christian kindness in it, I wish you would at least learn Christian manners.

**93.**

HOW NATURE FEELS WITH FAITH AND WITHOUT IT.—We should look on a true believer with deep respect. But the same goes for a true, honest unbeliever who is sure of what he thinks. When we are with people of that second kind, it feels like being near high mountains, where great rivers begin. When we are with believers, it feels like resting under strong, shady, peaceful trees.

**94.**

MURDER BY THE COURTS.—The two greatest cases in world history of people being killed by a court's judgment(8) were really, to put it without any exaggeration, suicides in disguise, and very well disguised. In both cases a man *wanted* to die. And in both cases he let his chest be pierced by a sword held in the hand of human injustice.

**95.**

"LOVE."—The finest artistic idea that gave Christianity an edge over other religions was found in one word: Love. Because of this, it became the religion of the *heart and song*. (In its two other creations, the Semitic peoples gave the world religions of heroes and great epic stories.) The word "love" holds so much meaning, and so much that stirs us and calls up memories and hopes, that even the dullest mind

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and the coldest heart catch a faint sense of what it means. The cleverest woman and the lowest man both think back to the moments in their lives when they were more or less unselfish, even if their romantic love never rose very high. And the huge number of people who *lack* love from their parents, their children, or a sweetheart, especially those whose sexual urges have been worn away, have found in Christianity what their hearts longed for.

**96.**

HOW CHRISTIANITY COMES TRUE. Christianity also has a way of thinking that is like Epicurus. It starts from this idea: God made man in his own image, so God can only ask man to do what man is able to do. That means Christian goodness and perfection can be reached, and often are reached. Take, for example, the belief that we should love our enemies. Maybe it is only a belief, or a kind of daydream, and not a real fact of the mind (not real love at all). Even so, as long as a person truly believes it, it gives them pure, unmixed happiness. (Why this is so is something a psychologist and a Christian might well disagree about.) So life here on earth might actually become a holy life. It could happen through the belief, or I should say the daydream, that one's life keeps not only the command to love our enemies but all the other commands of Christianity too. It could happen through believing that one has really taken in and lived out God's perfection, as the command says: "Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." In this way, a mistake can make Christ's promise come true.

**97.**

ABOUT THE FUTURE OF CHRISTIANITY. We can make a guess about how Christianity will fade away, and about the places where it will be slowest to pull back. To do that, we should look at where Protestantism spread so amazingly fast, and why. As everyone knows,

Protestantism promised to do everything the old Church did, but much more cheaply. It needed no expensive masses, no pilgrimages, and no grand shows put on by priests. It spread mostly among the peoples of the North. They were not as deeply tied as the peoples of the South to the old Church's symbols and its love of ceremony. In the South, the stronger old pagan religion lived on inside Christianity. In the North, though, Christianity meant going against the old faith and breaking away from it. So from the start it was more thoughtful and less about the senses. But for that very reason, in times of danger, it was also more fanatical and more stubborn. Suppose we manage to pull Christianity up by the roots through thinking. Then we can know right away the place where it will start to disappear: it is the very place where it will fight hardest to defend itself. In other places it will bend but not break. Like a tree, it will lose its leaves but grow new ones again, because there the senses, not thinking, have gone over to its side. And it is the senses that keep up the belief that the Church, for all its costs, is cheaper and easier to live with than a world of hard work and wages. After all, once you are used to free time (or half-idleness), how much do you think it is worth? The senses argue against a world without Christianity. They say there would be too much work in it and not enough free time. They take the side of magic. That is, they let God do the work himself (as the Latin saying puts it, "Let us pray, and let God do the work").

## 98.

PLAY-ACTING AND HONESTY AMONG UNBELIEVERS. There is one book that is fuller than any other of everything man now and then finds good for him, and that expresses it more faithfully. It shows deep, joyful happiness inside, and a readiness to give up everything or even die, while believing in and gazing at what one holds to be *one's own* truth. That book is the one that tells the story of

Christ. From that book a clever man can learn all the ways a book can become a book for the whole world, a handbook that everyone carries with them. Above all, he can learn the master trick: to present everything as already found out, and nothing as still to come or uncertain. All powerful books try to give the same impression. They try to make it seem as if the widest view the mind can have is closed in right here. They make it seem as if every star we can see now, or ever will see, must turn around the sun that shines in this book. So must not all purely scientific books have little power, for the very same reasons that such books have great power? Is the scientific book not doomed to live humbly, among humble people, only to be crucified in the end and never rise again? Compared with what religious people tell us about their "knowledge" and their "holy spirit," are not all honest scientists "poor in spirit"? Can any religion ask for more giving up of oneself, or pull selfish people out of themselves more mercilessly, than science does? We might say this and similar things when we have to defend ourselves against believers. In any case, we say it with a certain amount of play-acting, because it is impossible to defend yourself without some play-acting. But among ourselves our language must be more honest. We use a freedom that those believers are not even allowed to understand, for their own good. So away with the monk's hood of self-denial, and away with putting on a show of humility! Much more, and much better: that is the sound of our truth! If science were not tied to the pleasure of knowing, and to the usefulness of what we come to know, why would we care about science? If a little faith, love, and hope did not lead our souls toward knowledge, what would draw us to science? And even if the self counts for nothing in science, the inventive, happy self, every honest and hard-working self, counts for a great deal in the community of scientists. Every time a scientist holds back his own personality, he gets a personal reward. He gets the respect of those who give respect, and the joy of the people we wish well or honor. In some cases he gets fame and a

fair share of living on after death. And that is not even to mention lower motives and rewards, though these are exactly the reasons why most scientists have sworn, and keep swearing, to be loyal to the rules of that community and of science. If we had not stayed somewhat unscientific, what would science mean to us? Putting it all together and speaking plainly: "To a being that did nothing but know, knowledge would not matter at all." What separates us from the pious, the believers, is not the kind of faith and devotion we have, but the amount. We are happy with less. But suppose one of them shouted at us: "Be content, and show that you are content!" We could easily answer: "In fact, we are not among the most unhappy people. But you: if your faith makes you happy, then show that you are happy. Your faces have always done more harm to your faith than our arguments ever did! If the good news of your Bible were written on your faces, you would not need to demand so stubbornly that people believe in that book's authority. Your words and your actions should keep making the Bible unnecessary. In fact, through you, a new Bible should keep coming into being. As things are, your defense of Christianity grows out of your own un-Christian ways, and by defending it you are writing your own sentence of guilt. But if you want to get out of your unhappiness with Christianity, you should think hard about the experience of two thousand years. Dressed up modestly as a question, it could be put like this: 'If Christ really meant to save the world, can we not say that he failed?'"

**99.**

THE POET AS A GUIDE TO THE FUTURE. All the extra poetic energy that modern people still have, but that goes unused in the way we live now, should be put, all of it, toward one clear goal. That goal is not to paint a picture of the present, and not to bring back and sum up the past, but to show the way to the future. And the poet should

not do this as if he were some imaginative economist who has to predict a better state of the nation and society and then describe how it comes true. Instead, just as the poets of old drew pictures of the gods, he will draw beautiful pictures of human beings. He will sense where, right in the middle of our modern world and its realities, a great and noble soul is still possible. He will not dodge or reject that real world, the way poets usually do. He will find where such a soul can take shape in calm, balanced conditions, where it can last, where it can be seen, and where it can stand as an example of a type of person. In that way, by making people want to copy it and envy it, it will help to build the future. The poems of such a poet would stand out because they seem set apart and sheltered from the hot air of the passions. Next to this new art, all the old things would look like dusty junk from another age: the failure that can never be fixed, the snapping of every string on the human instrument, the mocking laughter and the grinding of teeth, and all tragedy and comedy in the usual old sense. They would look like smudges that blur the outline of the picture of the world. Instead there would be strength, kindness, gentleness, purity, and a natural, unforced self-control in the people and in what they do. There would be smooth, level ground that gives the foot rest and pleasure. There would be a bright sky reflected in faces and in events. Science and art would be joined together into something new and whole. The mind would live side by side with her sister, the soul, without pride or jealousy, and from their differences she would draw out the grace of seriousness, not the restlessness of quarreling. All of this would be the general setting, the background. Against it, the fine differences between the ideals brought to life would form the real picture: the picture of human greatness that keeps on growing. Many roads to this poetry of the future begin with Goethe. But the search needs good guides, and above all it needs far more strength than modern poets have. Those poets shamelessly show what is half-anim-

al in us, and they show the immaturity and lack of self-control that they confuse with power and naturalness.

**100.**

THE MUSE AS PENTHESILEA. "Better to rot than to be a woman with no charm." Once the Muse starts thinking like this, the end of her art is near once again. But that ending can be tragic, and it can also be comic.

**101.**

THE ROUNDABOUT ROAD TO THE BEAUTIFUL. Suppose the beautiful is the same as whatever gives pleasure, as the Muses once sang. Then the useful is often the roundabout road we must take to reach the beautiful. And the useful has every right to brush off the short-sighted criticism of people who live only for the moment, who refuse to wait, and who think they can get every good thing without ever taking the long way around.

**102.**

AN EXCUSE FOR MANY A WRONGDOING. The artist's endless urge to create, his constant looking outward, stops him from becoming a better and more beautiful person himself. The only exception is if his hunger for fame is strong enough to force him to show, in how he treats other people, a growth that matches the growing beauty and greatness of his works. In any case, he only has a limited amount of strength. So how could the part of his strength that he spends on himself do his work any good? Or the other way around: how could what he spends on his work do himself any good?

**103.**

PLEASING THE BEST PEOPLE. If our art has pleased the best people of our own time, that is a sign that it will not please the best people of the next age. Still, we have truly "lived for all time," and the praise of the best people makes sure of our fame.

**104.**

MADE OF THE SAME STUFF. If we are made of the same stuff as a book or a work of art, then deep down we believe it must be excellent. And we feel insulted if other people find it ugly, too heavily spiced, or showy.

**105.**

SPEECH AND FEELING. Speech was not given to us so that we could share our feelings. You can see this from the fact that all simple people are embarrassed to search for words to express their deeper feelings. They show these feelings only through actions, and even then they blush if others seem to guess why they are acting. And among poets, whom God usually does not give this sense of shame, the nobler ones use very few, short words when they speak of feelings, and they seem held back. Meanwhile, the true poets of feeling are mostly shameless in everyday life.

**106.**

A MISTAKE ABOUT DOING WITHOUT. If someone has not been fully cut off from an art for a long time, and still feels at home in it, he has no idea how little you lose by living without that art.

**107.**

THREE-QUARTERS STRENGTH. A work that is meant to feel healthy should be made using three-quarters of its maker's strength at most. If he has pushed himself to his very limit, the work stirs up the viewer and unsettles him with its strain. All good things have something lazy about them, and they lie around like cows in a field.

**108.**

NOT WANTING HUNGER AT THE TABLE. Fancy food fills a hungry man just as well as plain food, and no better. So the more showy artist would never dream of inviting a hungry man to his meal.

**109.**

LIVING WITHOUT ART AND WINE. Works of art are like wine. It is better if you can do without both and stick to water, and if the inner fire and inner sweetness of your soul then turn the water back into wine on its own.

**110.**

THE THIEVING GENIUS. The thieving genius in art, who knows how to fool even sharp minds, appears when someone, from his youth on, shamelessly treats every good thing that the law does not protect as if it belonged to one particular person: himself, as his rightful loot. Now, all the good things of past ages and past masters lie freely around us. They are fenced in and guarded only by the deep respect of the few people who know them. Our robber genius, through sheer nerve, defies these few and piles up a fortune for himself, a fortune that once again makes people bow and stand in awe.

## 111.

TO THE POETS OF BIG CITIES. In the gardens of modern poetry you can clearly tell that the sewers of big cities are too close. Mixed in with the smell of the flowers is something that gives away filth and rot. It pains me to ask: "You poets, when you have to baptize an innocent and beautiful feeling, must you always ask wit and dirt to be its godparents? Do you have to dress your noble goddess in a hood of devilishness and mockery? But where does this need come from, this duty?" The reason is this: you live too close to the sewers.

## 112.

ON THE SALT OF SPEECH.—Nobody has ever explained why the Greek writers held back so much. They had a richness and power of language that no one else has ever matched, yet they used it so sparingly that every Greek book written after the classical age looks rough, too brightly colored, and over the top by comparison. People say that near the ice of the North Pole and in the hottest countries, salt is used less and less. On the other hand, people who live on the plains and along the coasts in milder climates use a great deal of salt. Could it be that the Greeks had two reasons for not needing as much salt and spice as we do? Their minds were cooler and clearer than ours, but their deep, passionate nature was far more tropical than ours.

## 113.

THE FREEST WRITER.—In a book for free thinkers, you can't avoid mentioning Laurence Sterne, the man Goethe praised as the freest spirit of his century. May he be happy with the honor of being called the freest writer of all time! Next to him, all other writers seem stiff, clumsy, narrow-minded, and downright crude. With him, we

shouldn't talk about writing that is clear and neatly rounded off. Instead we should talk about "the never-ending melody." By that phrase I mean a style of art where clear shape keeps getting broken, pushed aside, and moved into the land of the vague, so that it means one thing and another thing at the same time. Sterne is the great master of the double meaning. And I mean this phrase in a much wider sense than people usually do when they use it about sex. If a reader always wants to know exactly what Sterne thinks about something, and whether he is wearing a serious face or a smiling one, we can give that reader up for lost. Sterne can do both with a single twist of his face. He can be right and wrong at the same moment, and he even wants to be. He likes to weave deep thought and silly comedy together. When he wanders off the subject, those detours are at the same time a continuation of the story and a further development of it. His wise sayings make fun of everything that sounds wise and preachy. His dislike of seriousness goes hand in hand with a habit of never taking anything only from the outside, on the surface. So in the right kind of reader, he stirs up a feeling of not being sure whether you are walking, lying down, or standing up. It is a feeling very much like floating in the air. He is the most changeable and flexible of writers, and he passes some of this flexibility on to his reader. Yes, Sterne swaps the roles without warning. He is often just as much the reader as the author. His book is like a play inside a play, an audience in a theater watching another audience in another theater. We have to give ourselves over completely to Sterne's mood, though we can always count on it being kind. It is oddly eye-opening to see how this double meaning of Sterne's affected a writer as great as Diderot. Being equally unclear all the way through is exactly Sterne's super-humor. In his novel Jacques the Fatalist, was Diderot copying Sterne, admiring him, mocking him, or parodying him? Nobody can be quite sure, and maybe the author wanted it that way. This very doubt makes the French unfair to the work of one of their greatest masters, a writer

who doesn't need to be ashamed when compared with anyone, ancient or modern. The French are too serious for humor, and especially for this humorous way of treating humor itself. Do I need to add that of all great authors, Sterne is the worst one to copy? In fact, he cannot be copied at all, and even Diderot had to pay a price for daring to try. What the fine French writers aimed for and achieved in prose, and some Greeks and Romans before them, is the exact opposite of what Sterne aims for and achieves. He rises, as a masterful exception, above everything that writers usually demand of themselves: good manners, self-control, strong character, sticking firmly to a purpose, covering the whole subject, clearness, and a dignified way of walking and holding one's face. Sadly, Sterne the man seems to have been all too much like Sterne the writer. His soul was like a squirrel, jumping from branch to branch with a restlessness that could never be satisfied. He knew everything that lies between the noble and the low-down rascal. He had sat in every seat, always with shameless, teary eyes and a face that kept changing. He was, if language can stand putting these words together, kind in a hard-hearted way. And in the middle of enjoying a weird and even corrupt imagination, he showed the shy charm of innocence. Perhaps no other man has ever had such a mix of the two sexes in body and spirit, or such unchained wit running into every vein and every muscle.

**114.**

A CHOSEN REALITY.—A good prose writer uses only words that belong to the language of everyday talk, though far from all of those words. That is how a carefully chosen style comes about. In the same way, the good poet of the future will show only what is real. He will turn his eyes away from all the fantastic, superstitious, half-whispered, forgotten stories that earlier poets spent their talents on. Only reality, though far from every kind of reality—a chosen reality.

**115.**

WORN-OUT KINDS OF ART.—Next to the real kinds of art, the kind full of great calm and the kind full of great movement, there are worn-out, spoiled kinds: tired, bored art and overexcited art. Both want their weakness to be mistaken for strength, and both want to be confused with the real kinds.

**116.**

A HERO MADE IMPOSSIBLE BY A LACK OF COLOR.—The typical poets and artists of our time like to paint their pictures against a background of shimmering red, green, gray, and gold. That background is nervous, edgy sensuality, a state that the children of this century understand very well. The problem comes when we do not look at these pictures through the eyes of our century. Then we see that the great figures these artists paint have something flickering, shaky, and dizzy about them. So we don't believe they could do heroic deeds. At most, we credit them with fake-heroic, show-off misdeeds.

**117.**

OVERLOADED STYLE.—An overloaded style comes from a weakening of the power to organize things, combined with a huge supply of tricks and intentions. At the beginnings of art, the exact opposite situation sometimes shows up.

**118.**

BEAUTY BELONGS TO THE FEW.—History and experience tell us something about the strange and grotesque in art, the kind that means something, that mysteriously stirs up the imagination and carries us beyond everyday life. It is older than beauty and the respect for beauty in art, and it grows more wildly. And it starts to bloom enorm-

ously when the feeling for beauty is fading. For the great majority of people, this grotesque seems to be a stronger need than beauty, probably because it works like a cruder drug.

## 119.

WHERE OUR TASTE FOR ART COMES FROM.—Let's look at the very first seeds of the feeling for art. Let's ask what different kinds of joy the earliest art gave people, for example among primitive tribes. The first joy we find is the joy of understanding what someone else means. In this case, art is a kind of riddle. Whoever solves it feels pleased with how quick and sharp his own mind is.—Next, even the roughest works of art remind us of good things we have really lived through, and so they give us joy. This happens, for example, when the artist hints at a hunt, a victory, or a wedding.—Then again, what the art shows may make us feel excited, moved, or fired up, for instance when it praises revenge and danger. Here the pleasure lies in the excitement itself, in beating boredom.—Even the memory of unpleasant things can bring great joy, as long as we have gotten past them, or as long as they make us seem interesting to the listener as material for art. An example is when a singer tells about the bad luck of a bold sailor. Art gets the credit for this joy.—A finer kind of joy comes from seeing everything that is regular and balanced in lines, points, and rhythms. This is because, by a kind of likeness, it wakes up our feeling for everything orderly and regular in life. And it is order alone that we have to thank for all our well-being. So when we love balance and symmetry, we are, without knowing it, honoring rules and right proportions as the source of the happiness we have had before. In this case, the joy is a kind of song of thanks. Only when people start to get a bit tired of this last kind of joy does an even finer feeling come in: the sense that pleasure might also lie in breaking what is balanced and regular. This feeling, for example, pushes us to look for sense in

what seems senseless. The kind of artistic riddle-solving that comes out of this is, in a way, a higher form of the very first artistic joy we mentioned.—Whoever follows this line of thinking further will see which kinds of theories about the nature of art and beauty are being completely rejected here.

**120.**

NOT TOO CLOSE TOGETHER.—Good thoughts are hurt when they come too close one after another, because they block each other from view. That is why great artists and writers have used plenty of ordinary, so-so material in between.

**121.**

ROUGHNESS AND WEAKNESS.—Artists in every age have found out that there is a certain strength in roughness, and that not everyone who wants to be rough is able to be. They have also found out that many kinds of weakness have a strong effect on our feelings. From this come many artistic tricks used as stand-ins for the real thing. Not even the greatest and most honest artists can keep from using them.

**122.**

GOOD MEMORY.—Many people never become thinkers for one reason only: their memory is too good.

**123.**

MAKING PEOPLE HUNGRIER INSTEAD OF FILLING THEM UP.—Great artists imagine that they have completely taken over a person's soul. In truth, and often to their painful disappointment, they have only made that soul bigger and hungrier than before. It is now so

roomy that a dozen even greater artists could dive into its depths and still not fill it up.

**124.**

ARTISTS' WORRY.—Many artists whose taste is going downhill are afraid that people won't believe their figures are truly alive. This fear can lead them to paint or carve those figures so that they look as if they were mad. The very same fear, on the other hand, led the Greek artists of the earliest times to give even dead and badly wounded men a smile. They knew a smile was the clearest sign of life. They didn't care about the real shapes that nature gives to a body when it is breathing its last.

**125.**

THE CIRCLE HAS TO BE FINISHED.—Suppose someone follows a philosophy, or a kind of art, all the way to the end of its life and even beyond. That person understands, from his own inner experience, why the masters and students who came later so often turned away with a dismissive wave and went off down a new path. The circle has to be drawn all the way round. But each single person, even the greatest, sits firmly on his own spot on the edge of that circle. He wears a hard, stubborn look, as if the circle should never be finished.

**126.**

OLD ART AND TODAY'S SOUL.—Every art keeps getting better at expressing states of the mind and heart, especially lively, delicate, forceful, and passionate ones. Because of this, the later masters have been spoiled by all these ways of expressing things, and they don't feel comfortable when they stand in front of old works of art. They feel as if the people of the past simply didn't have the tools to make their

souls speak clearly, and maybe also lacked some basic technical skills. So they think they must lend a helping hand here, because they believe that all souls are alike, or even one and the same. But the truth is different. Measure, balance, a scorn for prettiness and charm, a strictness the artists weren't even aware of, a coolness like early morning, a turning away from passion, as if passion meant the death of art—these are what make up the feeling and the moral outlook of all the old masters. They didn't pick and arrange their ways of expression by chance. They chose them because those ways were tied, by necessity, to their moral outlook. Now that we know this, should we deny later people the right to fill the old works with their own soul? No. These works can only stay alive if we give them our soul. Only our own blood lets them speak to us. A truly "historical" way of talking would just be ghosts speaking to ghosts. We honor the great artists less by a dry, timid fear that leaves every word and every note untouched, and more by working hard to keep helping them into a new life. It's true: if Beethoven suddenly came back to life and heard one of his works played with the modern liveliness and nervous fine detail that our great performers are famous for, he would probably stay silent for a long time. He wouldn't know whether to lift his hand to curse or to bless. But perhaps in the end he would say: "Well, well! That is neither me nor not-me, but some third thing. It seems to me to be something right, too, even if it isn't exactly the right thing. But you must decide for yourselves what to do, since in any case you are the ones who have to listen. As our Schiller says, 'the living man is right.' So do it your own way, and let me go back down to my grave."

## 127.

AGAINST THOSE WHO LOOK DOWN ON SHORT WRITING.—A short saying can be the fruit and harvest of long, deep thought. But a reader who is new to this field, and has never thought about the

matter in question, sees something unfinished, like a seed not yet grown, in every short saying. And he hints, with some blame, that the author should please stop serving up such raw, half-cooked food.

**128.**

AGAINST THE SHORT-SIGHTED.—Do you think this is patchy, piecemeal work just because it is offered to you in pieces, as it has to be?

**129.**

READERS OF SHORT SAYINGS.—The worst readers of short sayings are the author's own friends, when they insist on tying a general idea back to the one particular event that first gave rise to the saying. This weak, soft-headed attitude wipes out all the author's hard work. Instead of a lesson in thinking and a thoughtful frame of mind, they get, as they deserve, nothing but the pleasure of satisfying cheap curiosity.

**130.**

HOW READERS INSULT AUTHORS.—A reader insults an author twice over. First, by praising his second book in a way that puts down his first one, or the other way round. Second, by expecting the author to thank him for it.

**131.**

THE THRILLING PART OF ART'S HISTORY.—We get terribly tense when we follow the history of an art—for example, the art of public speaking in ancient Greece. Going from one master to the next, we watch them take more and more care to obey the old rules and the new ones, along with all the limits they placed on themselves. We can see that the bow, stretched so tight, must snap. And we see that the

so-called "loose" way of writing was once necessary and almost helpful, even though in it the wonderful tools of expression were smothered and hidden. In this case, that loose way was the showy, overdecorated style known as Asianism.

**132.**

TO THE GREAT ONES IN ART.—O great man, you bring into this world a passion for something, and that passion makes the minds of the many grow stunted. Knowing this is humiliating. But the passionate fan wears his hump, his deformity, with pride and pleasure. And you can comfort yourself with the feeling that you have added to the world's happiness.

**133.**

ART LOVERS WITHOUT A CONSCIENCE.—The real fanatics of an art school may be those people who have no feel for art at all. They don't even know the basics of how art is studied and made. Yet they are struck by the strongest and most basic effects an art can have. For them there is no artistic conscience, no inner sense of taste to check them, and so nothing holds them back from becoming fanatics.

**134.**

HOW THE NEW MUSIC WANTS TO MOVE THE SOUL.—The new music has an artistic goal, which people now call the "never-ending melody." That name is strong, but not very clear. You can understand the goal like this: you walk into the sea, you slowly lose your firm footing on the bottom, and in the end you give yourself over completely to the water. You have to swim. With the older music that came before, you were made to dance, with movements that were delicate, or grand, or full of passion. Dancing needs a steady beat. The

listener has to keep a clear balance of timing and strength inside himself, and that meant constant self-control. That older music worked its magic through a mix of two things: the cooler breeze that came from this careful control, and the warmer breath of musical excitement. Richard Wagner wanted to stir the soul in a different way, one that is close to swimming and floating, as I said. This is maybe the most important of all his new ideas. His famous method, the "never-ending melody," grew out of this goal and is made to serve it. It tries to break, and sometimes even to look down on, every mathematical balance of power between timing and strength. He is almost too good at inventing such effects. To the old school, they sound like rhythmic contradictions, even like insults to something sacred. He is afraid of music turning to stone, of it hardening into crystals, of it becoming like a fixed building. So he puts a rhythm of three beats against a rhythm of two, quite often brings in rhythms of five and seven beats, and repeats a phrase right away but stretches it out, so its timing is doubled and then tripled. If people copy this kind of art lazily, it could become a great danger to music. Alongside all this overflowing rhythmic feeling, moral breakdown and decline are hiding, waiting to attack. The danger will become very great if this music joins itself more and more tightly with a completely realistic style of acting and miming, one that is not trained or guided by any higher models of form and shape. That kind of acting has no sense of limits in itself, and it cannot give any limits to its close relative, music, which by nature is all too womanly and soft.

**135.**

POET AND REALITY.—Take a poet who is not in love with real life. His Muse, the spirit that inspires him, will not be real life either. She will give him children with empty eyes and bones that are far too fragile. In other words, his works will come out weak and lifeless.

**136.**

MEANS AND END.—In art, a good goal does not make any method acceptable. But holy, worthy methods can make the goal acceptable.

**137.**

THE WORST READERS.—The worst readers are the ones who behave like soldiers looting a town. They grab a few things they might find useful, cover everything else with dirt and mess, and then curse and insult the whole thing.

**138.**

SIGNS OF A GOOD WRITER.—Good writers share two things. They would rather be understood than admired. And they do not write for the reader who is always judging and far too clever for his own good.

**139.**

THE MIXED KINDS.—In art, mixed kinds of work show that their makers do not trust their own strength. They look for extra help, for people to speak up for them, for places to hide. That is what happens with the poet who calls on philosophy for help, the musician who calls on drama, and the thinker who calls on fancy speech-making.

**140.**

KEEPING QUIET.—When his book starts to speak, the author has to stop speaking.

**141.**

SIGNS OF RANK.—All poets and writers who love the words "best," "greatest," and "most" are trying to do more than they are able to.

**142.**

COLD BOOKS.—The deep thinker counts on having readers who share with him the happiness that comes from thinking deeply. So a book that looks cold and dry can, if you see it in the right light, seem to shine with the sunshine of a cheerful mind. It can become a true comfort to the soul.

**143.**

A TRICK OF THE SLOW THINKER.—The slow thinker usually teams up with talkativeness and with formal, ceremonial manners. Through talking a lot, he thinks he is becoming quick and smooth. Through ceremony, he makes his oddness look as if it came from his own free will and an artistic plan, as if he were aiming at dignity, and dignity needs slow movement.

**144.**

THE BAROQUE STYLE.—Some thinkers and writers are not born for, or trained in, careful argument and putting ideas in a logical order. Without realising it, they will turn to fancy speech-making and dramatic forms. After all, their goal is to make themselves understood and to win by force. They do not care whether they act like a shepherd, honestly leading the hearts of other people toward themselves, or like a robber, catching those hearts by surprise. This is true in the visual arts, like painting and sculpture, just as in music. There, a sense of weak argument, or a lack of ways to express or tell things, together with a pressing, overpowering urge to create forms, gives birth to the kind of style called "baroque." Only badly educated and arrogant people will right away hear this word as an insult. Baroque style always appears when a great art is in decline, when the demands of classical expression in that art have become too heavy. It is a

natural event. We will watch it with sadness, because it is a sign that night is coming. But we will also watch it with admiration for its own special ways of making up for what is missing in expression and storytelling. This style already includes choosing materials and subjects full of the highest dramatic tension, the kind that make the heart shake even when there is no art at all, because heaven and hell are far too close to the feelings. Then there is the speech-making of strong passion and big gestures, of ugly grandeur, of huge masses, in fact of sheer size for its own sake, as you can see in Michelangelo, the father or grandfather of the Italian baroque artists. There are twilight lights, glowing and blazing like fire, playing over those boldly shaped forms. There are always new experiments in methods and goals, heavily underlined by artists for other artists, while the ordinary person must imagine he is seeing nature's own art pouring out without thought, overflowing from every horn of plenty. All these features that make up the greatness of that style are neither possible nor allowed in the earlier stages of a branch of art, before and during its classical period. Such luxuries hang on the tree for a long time like forbidden fruit. Right now, as music is entering this last stage, we can get to know the baroque style in a special splendour. And by comparing, we can learn a lot about earlier ages. Since the time of the Greeks, there has often been a baroque style, in poetry, in speech-making, in prose writing, in sculpture, and, as everyone knows, in architecture. This style lacks the very highest nobility, the nobility of a perfection that is innocent, unaware of itself, and triumphant. Even so, it has given pleasure to many of the best and most serious minds of their times. So, as I said, it is arrogant to look down on it completely, no matter how glad we may be that our taste for it has not made us blind to the purer and greater style.

**145.**

THE VALUE OF HONEST BOOKS.—Honest books make the reader honest. At the very least, they do this by stirring up his hatred and dislike, which crafty cleverness otherwise knows so well how to hide. When we face a book, we let ourselves go, however much we hold back when dealing with people.

**146.**

HOW ART WINS SUPPORTERS.—A few beautiful passages here and there, an exciting overall mood, and a moving, gripping ending—that much of a work of art is within reach even of most ordinary people who are not experts. Sometimes there is a period in art when people want to win over most of these ordinary people to the artists' side, and maybe build up a group of supporters just to keep art alive. In such a time, the creative artist would be wise to offer nothing more than these things. That way he will not waste his strength in areas where nobody will thank him for it. Because doing the rest of the work—copying the way Nature grows and develops step by step, like a living thing—would in that case be like planting seeds in water: nothing would come of it.

**147.**

BECOMING GREAT AT THE COST OF HISTORY.—Every later master who steers the taste of art lovers into his own direction, like water into a channel, also causes something without meaning to. People start picking and choosing among the older masters and their works, and judging them all over again. Whatever in those older artists fits him and is like him, whatever seems to point ahead to him and hint at him, from then on looks like the only important part of them and

their works. It is like a fruit with a worm hidden inside: usually a big mistake is hiding in this way of seeing.

**148.**

HOW AN AGE IS TEMPTED INTO LOVING ART.—Suppose we use all the magic of artists and thinkers to teach people to look up with respect at the faults of those artists and thinkers—their mental poverty, their silly crushes and passions. That is quite possible to do. And suppose we show people only the noble-looking side of crime and foolishness, and only the touching, appealing part of weakness, softness, and blind devotion. That too has been done often enough. If we do these things, then we have found a way to fill even an age that has no feeling for philosophy or art with a wild, thrilled love of philosophy and art—and especially of thinkers and artists as people. And in the worst case, this may be the only way left to protect the very existence of such delicate and easily broken beings.

**149.**

CRITICISM AND JOY.—Criticism gives a great deal of pleasure to the person doing it. This is true of one-sided and unfair criticism as well as of smart criticism. So much pleasure, in fact, that the world owes thanks to every work and every action that stirs up a lot of criticism and a lot of critics. Because criticism pulls along behind it a sparkling parade of good things: cheerfulness, wit, admiring oneself, pride, learning, and plans to make things better.—The God of joy made the bad and the average for the same reason he made the good.

**150.**

GOING PAST HIS LIMITS.—Sometimes an artist wants to be more than an artist—for example, the one who wakes up the conscience of

his people. When that happens, he ends up, as a punishment, falling in love with a monster made of morals. The Muse laughs at this. She is a kind-hearted goddess, but she can also be spiteful when she is jealous. Milton and Klopstock are examples of this.

**151.**

A GLASS EYE.—Some talented artists lean toward moral subjects, moral characters, and moral motives, and toward giving the work of art a "beautiful soul." But often this is only a glass eye, worn by an artist who does not have a beautiful soul himself. It can happen, though rarely, that this fake eye finally turns into a real, living one—even if it is a real eye with a somewhat troubled look. But what usually happens is that the whole world thinks it sees something real and natural, when there is only cold glass.

**152.**

WRITING AND THE WISH TO WIN.—Writing should always show a victory—in fact, a victory over oneself—which has to be shared with others for their benefit. There are, however, writers with upset stomachs, so to speak. They only write when they cannot digest something, or when something is still stuck in their teeth. Through their anger, without knowing it, they try to make the reader feel sick too, and to push him around by force. In other words, they want a victory, but a victory over other people.

**153.**

A GOOD BOOK NEEDS TIME.—Every good book tastes bitter when it first comes out, because it has the flaw of being new. On top of that, it is harmed by its author still being alive, if he is famous and much talked about. That is because everyone is used to mixing up the au-

thor with his work. Whatever depth, sweetness, and brilliance the book may hold has to come out slowly over the years. It needs to be looked after by respect—first growing respect, then old respect, and finally the respect that has become tradition. Many hours have to go by, and many spiders have to spin their webs around the book. A book is made better by good readers, and made clearer by good opponents.

**154.**

OVERDOING IT AS AN ARTISTIC TRICK.—Artists know very well how to use excess—piling things on—as an artistic method, to give the impression of great richness. This is one of those harmless tricks for charming the soul that an artist has to know. In his world, all that matters is how things look, so the means he uses to create that look do not have to be genuine.

**155.**

THE HIDDEN BARREL-ORGAN.—Genius has a bigger cloak than talent, so it knows better than talent how to hide its barrel-organ—the little machine that plays the same tunes. But in the end, genius too can only play its seven old pieces over and over again.

**156.**

THE NAME ON THE TITLE PAGE.—These days it is the custom, almost a duty, for the author's name to be printed on the book. This is a main reason why books have so little influence. If books are good, they are worth more than the people who wrote them, because they are the purest essence of those people. But as soon as the author shows himself on the title page, that pure essence, as the reader sees it, gets watered down by the personal—by the most personal part of

all—and the book fails to do what it was meant to do. The highest ambition of the mind is to no longer appear as one particular person.

**157.**

THE SHARPEST CRITICISM.—We give the sharpest criticism of a person or a book when we point out what that person's or that book's ideal is.

**158.**

LITTLE LOVE OR NONE.—Every good book is written for one particular kind of reader and people like him. For that very reason, all other readers—the huge majority—look at it with dislike. So its reputation stands on a narrow base and has to be built up little by little.—The average or bad book is average or bad precisely because it tries to please a great many people, and it does please them.

**159.**

MUSIC AND SICKNESS.—The danger of the new music is this: it holds the cup of thrill and high excitement up to our lips so temptingly, and with such a show of moral rapture, that even a noble, self-controlled person always drinks one drop too much. This tiny bit of excess, repeated again and again, can in the end shake up and ruin mental health more deeply than any crude, wild excess could. So there is nothing left to do but one day run away from the cave of the nymph, like Odysseus, and fight your way through dangers and stormy seas back to the chimney smoke of Ithaca, your home, and into the arms of a simpler and more human wife.

**160.**

A BENEFIT FOR OPPONENTS.—A book full of intelligence passes some of that intelligence on even to the people who argue against it.

**161.**

YOUNG PEOPLE AND CRITICISM.—For young people, criticizing a book means not letting a single fresh, useful thought from it touch them. It means shielding their own skin with hands and feet. A young person sets himself against everything new that he cannot love all at once, as a whole. He stays on the defensive. And in doing so, he commits, as often as he can, a sin that serves no purpose at all.

**162.**

THE POWER OF SHEER AMOUNT.—Here is the strangest contradiction in the whole history of poetry. When it comes to everything that made the old poets great, a man can be a barbarian, full of faults and misshapen from head to foot, and still be the greatest of poets. That is how it is with Shakespeare. Compared with Sophocles, Shakespeare is like a mine of endless riches, full of gold, lead, and rubble all mixed together. Sophocles, on the other hand, is not just gold. He is gold in its finest form, so fine that we almost forget what the metal is worth as money. But when there is a huge enough amount of something, at its very strongest, it has the same effect as high quality. That works out well for Shakespeare.

**163.**

EVERY BEGINNING IS RISKY.—A poet can choose one of two ways. He can raise the feeling step by step, from one level to the next, until at last he lifts it to a great height. Or he can try a surprise attack and, right from the start, pull the bell-rope as hard as he can. Both ways

have their danger. In the first case, the listener may run away from him out of boredom. In the second, the listener may run away out of fright.

**164.**

IN DEFENSE OF CRITICS.—Insects sting us, not because they are mean, but because they also want to live. It is the same with our critics. They want our blood, not our pain.

**165.**

HOW SHORT SAYINGS ARE RECEIVED.—When a short saying suddenly lights up their minds with its plain, bare truth, people without experience always think it is old and already well known. They look at the author with suspicion, as if he had tried to steal something that belongs to everyone. Yet they love half-truths that are heavily spiced, and they let the author know it. The author knows how to value this hint. From it, he can easily guess where he has succeeded and where he has failed.

**166.**

THE WISH TO WIN.—Imagine an artist who, in everything he tries, goes beyond the limits of his strength. In the end, he will sweep the crowd along with him, simply because they are watching the show of his fierce struggle. Success does not only come with winning. It also comes with the wish to win.

**167.**

WRITING FOR ONESELF.—A sensible author writes for no future readers except his own future self. In other words, he writes for his own old age, so that even then he can still enjoy himself.

## 168.

IN PRAISE OF THE SHORT SAYING.—A good short saying is too hard for time to chew up. All the centuries cannot wear it away, even though every age feeds on it. That is why it is the greatest contradiction in literature: something that never dies in the middle of constant change. It is a food that is always highly valued, like salt. But unlike salt, it never loses its flavor.

## 169.

THE SECOND-CLASS NEED FOR ART.—Ordinary people may have something that could be called a need for art. But it is small, and it can be satisfied cheaply. On the whole, we must honestly admit, the leftover scraps of art are enough to meet this need. Take, for example, the kind of tunes and songs that bring real joy to the strongest, most unspoiled, and most honest-hearted groups of people. Go and live among shepherds, cowherds, farmers, hunters, soldiers, and sailors, and you will find the answer for yourself. And in country towns, right in the homes where old family virtue is passed down, isn't it the worst music being made today that people love and, you could even say, treasure? Anyone who talks about ordinary people as they are now having deeper needs and unfulfilled longings for art is either a crackpot or a fraud. Be honest! Today, only rare, exceptional people have a need for art in the highest sense. That is because art is once again in decline, and for now, human strength and hope are aimed at other things.—Besides this, away from the common people, in the upper and highest levels of society, there really is a broader, wider need for art, but it is a need *of the second class*. Here there is a kind of artistic community, which may well mean to be sincere. But let us look at who belongs to it! In general, they are: the more refined unhappy people, who cannot find real pleasure in themselves; the educated, who have not become free enough to do without the comforts of reli-

gion, yet do not find its incense sweet enough anymore; the half-noble, who are too weak to fight, through some heroic change of heart or act of giving things up, the one basic mistake of their lives or the harmful leaning of their characters; the very talented, who think they are too grand to be useful through humble work, and are too lazy for real work that takes sacrifice; girls who cannot build a satisfying set of duties for themselves; women who have bound themselves through a careless or wicked marriage, and know they are not bound firmly enough; scholars, doctors, merchants, and officials who specialized too early and never gave their lives enough room to grow, who do their jobs well, it is true, but with a worm gnawing at their hearts; and finally, all the artists who fall short. These are the people who truly need art nowadays! What do they really want from art? They want art to chase away hours and moments of discomfort, boredom, and a half-guilty conscience. And if possible, they want art to turn the faults of their own lives and characters into faults of the world's fate. The Greeks were very different. In their art, they expressed the flowing out and overflowing of their own sense of well-being and health. They loved to see their own perfection once more, as if from a place outside themselves. What led them to art was delight in themselves. What leads people today to art is disgust with themselves.

**170.**

THE GERMANS AT THE THEATRE.—The real stage talent of the Germans was Kotzebue. He and his Germans, both the upper class and the middle class, belonged together and could not be pulled apart. The people of his time should have said about him, quite seriously, "In him we live and move and have our being." With him there was nothing forced, nothing fake, no half-hearted enjoyment. Everyone understood what he was able to do and what he wanted to do. In fact, right up to now, honest success on the German stage has belonged to

those who inherited Kotzebue's methods and influence, whether they are ashamed of that or not. At least this is true wherever comedy still thrives at all. Because of this, much of the German character of that time still lives on, sometimes far away from the big cities. What was that character like? Good-natured. Unable to hold back from small pleasures. Always ready to cry. Wanting, at least in the theatre, to be able to shake off their inborn seriousness and their strict sense of duty and discipline. Forgiving with a smile, even with a laugh. Mixing up goodness and sympathy and melting them into one thing, which is the main feature of German sentimentality. Extremely happy when they saw a noble, generous deed. Apart from that, obedient towards their bosses, jealous of one another, and yet deep down completely pleased with themselves. That is what they were like, and that is what he was like.—The second great talent for drama was Schiller. He found a kind of audience that nobody had ever paid attention to before: the young, inexperienced German boys and girls. His poetry answered their higher, nobler feelings, which were stronger but also more mixed-up. It answered their delight in the ring of big moral words, a delight that starts to fade once people reach their thirties. So, thanks to the passion and the strong loyalty of the young, he won a success that slowly spread and helped him with older people too. Generally speaking, Schiller made the Germans young again. Goethe stood, and still stands, above the Germans in every way. He will never belong to them. How could a nation that was comfortable and well-meaning ever reach up to Goethe's depth of mind? Beethoven wrote music, and Schopenhauer wrote philosophy, far over the heads of the Germans. In just the same way, Goethe wrote his plays *Tasso* and *Iphigenie* over their heads. He was followed by a small group of very cultured people, who had been shaped by the ancient world, by life, and by travel, and who had grown beyond German ways of thinking. He himself did not want it any other way.—Then things changed. The Romantics set up a carefully planned worship of Goethe. Their amaz-

ing skill at praising things was handed on to the followers of Hegel, who were the real teachers of the Germans in this century. The country's growing national pride ended up helping the fame of German poets. And the true measure of the nation, which is whether it could honestly enjoy something, was pushed hard under the opinions of a few individuals and under that national pride. In other words, people began to enjoy things because they were forced to. That is when a false, fake German culture was born. This culture was ashamed of Kotzebue. It put Sophocles, Calderon, and even the Second Part of Goethe's *Faust* on the stage. And because its tongue is spoiled and its stomach is overstuffed, it no longer knows what it really likes and what it finds boring.—Happy are those who have taste, even if it is bad taste! Only through this quality can a person be both wise and happy. That is why the Greeks, who were very refined in such matters, called a wise man by a word that means "man of taste." And they called wisdom, in art as well as in science, "taste" (*sophia*).

**171.**

MUSIC ALWAYS ARRIVES LATE IN EVERY CULTURE.—All the arts tend to grow in the soil of a particular culture, under particular social and political conditions. Of all of them, music is the last plant to come up. It appears in the autumn of the culture it belongs to, when that culture is already beginning to fade. By then, the first signs of a new spring can usually be seen already. Sometimes music rings out into a new and surprised world like the language of an age that has been forgotten, and it comes too late. In the art of the Dutch and Flemish composers, the soul of the Christian Middle Ages finally found its fullest voice. Their buildings made of sound are a true sister of Gothic architecture, equal to it, even though they were born after it had died. Only in Handel's music could you hear the best part of the soul of Luther and people like him: the great heroic drive, rooted in

the Old Testament, that created the whole Reformation movement. Mozart was the first to put into golden melody the age of Louis XIV and the art of Racine and Claude Lorrain. The eighteenth century was an age of wild enthusiasm, of broken ideals and short-lived happiness. Yet it only sang its last song in the music of Beethoven and Rossini. Someone who loves sentimental comparisons might say that every truly important piece of music was a swan song, the beautiful song a swan is said to sing just before it dies.—In fact, music is not a universal language for all time, as people so often say when they praise it. Instead, it matches exactly one particular period and one particular warmth of feeling. Its inner law is a very definite, individual culture, shaped by a certain time and place. A Greek would not understand the music of Palestrina at all. And what would the music of Rossini have meant to Palestrina?—It may be that our most modern German music, which stands so high and wants so badly to stand highest, will soon no longer be understood. This music grew out of a culture that is quickly falling apart. It grew from the soil of the age of reaction and restoration, when people tried to turn back the clock. In that age, a kind of Catholic feeling, along with a love of everything native, national, and primitive, burst into bloom and spread a mixed perfume over Europe. These two emotional currents were taken up at their strongest and pushed to their furthest limits, and they found their final expression in the music of Wagner. Wagner loved the old native legends. He freely idealised their strange gods and heroes, who are really ruling beasts of prey that now and then have fits of thoughtfulness, generosity, and boredom. He brought these figures back to life, and he also gave them the medieval Christian thirst for ecstatic pleasure of the senses and for rising into the spiritual. All this Wagnerian borrowing and blending of materials, souls, figures, and words would clearly show the spirit of his music, if that music could not, like all music, speak quite plainly for itself. This spirit fights the last battle of reaction against the spirit of the Enlightenment, which came into this

century from the last one. It also fights against the ideas that went beyond nations: those of French revolutionary romanticism, and the dull, flavourless plans of the English and Americans for rebuilding state and society.—But isn't it obvious that the ways of thinking and feeling that Wagner and his followers seemed to crush have long since grown strong again? Isn't it obvious that his late musical protest against them mostly reaches ears that would rather hear different, opposite notes? And so one day that high and wonderful art will suddenly no longer be understood, and it will be covered over by the spider's web of forgetting.—When we think about this situation, we must not let ourselves be fooled by short-lived ups and downs. These come like a reaction inside a reaction, like a mountain-high wave sinking for a moment in the middle of a great storm. So this decade of national war, of Catholics suffering for loyalty to the Pope, and of socialist unrest may, in its later effects, even help Wagner's art to suddenly gain a halo of glory. But that would not guarantee that it "has a future," or that it is the future. It lies in the very nature of music that the fruits of its great harvest of culture lose their taste and wither sooner than the fruits of the visual arts, such as sculpture and painting, or the fruits that grow on the tree of knowledge. Of all the things human artistic sense has produced, ideas are the most solid and long-lasting.

**172.**

THE POET IS NO LONGER A TEACHER.—It may sound strange to people today, but there were once poets and artists whose souls stood above the passions, with their pleasures and their violent fits. So these artists found their joy in purer materials, in nobler people, and in finer plots and how they are untangled at the end. Most artists of our day set the will free, and for that very reason they can sometimes free life itself. But those earlier artists tamed the will. They were like

charmers of wild animals, and they created human beings. In fact, they shaped life, reshaped it, and shaped it anew. The fame of today's poets, on the other hand, comes from unharnessing, unchaining, and smashing things.—The ancient Greeks expected the poet to be a teacher of grown men. How ashamed a poet would be today if anyone expected that of him! He is not even a good student of himself, and so he never turns himself into a good poem or a fine picture. Even in the best case, he stays a shy, charming ruin of a temple. But at the same time he is a cave full of cravings, overgrown like a ruin with flowers, nettles, and poisonous weeds, and lived in and haunted by snakes, worms, spiders, and birds. He makes us sadly wonder why the noblest and most precious things must grow up straight away as ruins, with no past of perfection behind them and no future of perfection ahead.

**173.**

LOOKING FORWARD AND LOOKING BACK.—There is an art that streams out of Homer, Sophocles, Theocritus, Calderon, Racine, and Goethe as the overflow of a wise and balanced way of living. That is the true art, and we reach for it once we ourselves have become wiser and more balanced. It is not the wild outpouring, however delightful, of hot and brightly coloured things from an undisciplined, chaotic soul. That is what we meant by "art" when we were young. It is clear, from the way things are, that at certain stages of life people truly need an art of strain and excitement, an art that dislikes what is orderly, steady, simple, and logical. Artists have to provide it. Otherwise the soul of people at those stages would let out its feelings in other ways, through all kinds of disorder and bad behaviour. That is why young people, as they usually are, full to the brim and bubbling over and tormented above all by boredom, need that art of delightful disorder. So do women who lack work that fully occupies their soul. And for that very reason they burn all the more fiercely with a longing for

satisfaction that does not change, for happiness without dullness and without drunkenness.

**174.**

AGAINST THE ART OF ARTWORKS.—Art is meant, first and above all, to make life more beautiful. It is meant to make us bearable to ourselves, and if possible pleasant in the eyes of other people. With this life's mission in mind, art calms us down and keeps us in check. It creates ways for people to deal with each other, and it ties uneducated people to rules of decency, cleanliness, politeness, and knowing when to speak and when to keep quiet. So art has to hide or transform everything ugly—the painful, terrible, and disgusting parts that, no matter how hard we try, will always break out again, because they come from the very roots of human nature. Art has to do this job especially when it comes to strong passions and the pains and worries of the soul. It has to let what is meaningful shine through the ugliness that cannot be avoided or overcome. Compared with this great, more-than-great life's mission, so-called real art, the art of artworks, is just an extra. A man who feels inside himself more of these powers to beautify, hide, and transform than he needs will in the end try to let that extra out in works of art. The same is true, in special cases, of a whole nation.—But these days, as a rule, we start art at the wrong end. We grab hold of its tail. We think that artworks are real art, and that life should be improved and changed through them—what fools we are! If we start a dinner with dessert and try one sweet after another, it's no wonder we ruin our stomachs, and even lose our appetite for the good, hearty, nourishing meal that art is inviting us to!

**175.**

WHY ART KEEPS GOING.—Why, really, does creative art still exist these days? Because most people who have free time (and this kind of

art is only for them) believe they cannot fill that time without music, theatres and art galleries, novels and poetry. Suppose we could keep them away from this treat. Then one of two things would happen. Either they would chase free time less eagerly, and people would less often see the rich showing off in a way that stirs up envy (a big gain for keeping society steady). Or they would still have free time, but they would learn to think about what can be learned and unlearned: their work, for example, the people they spend time with, and the pleasure they could give to others. In both cases, the whole world, except the artist, would gain from it.—Of course, many strong-minded, sensible readers could object to this. Still, it must be said, for the sake of the crude and spiteful readers, that the author himself is also taking part in this protest, and that there is a lot to be read in his book that is not actually written down in it.

**176.**

THE VOICE OF THE GODS.—The poet puts into words the higher opinions that everyone in his nation shares. He is the nation's mouthpiece, its flute. But with rhythm and rhyme and all his other artistic tools, he says these things in such a way that the nation sees them as something totally new and amazing, and seriously believes that he is speaking for the gods. In fact, while he is lost in the clouds of creating, the poet himself forgets where all his wisdom comes from—from his father and mother, from teachers and all kinds of books, from the street, and especially from the priest. He is fooled by his own art. In a simple, trusting age, he really believes that a god is speaking through him, and that he is creating while filled with holy inspiration. In truth, he is only repeating what he has learned, a mix of common wisdom and common foolishness. So, to the extent that a poet really is "the voice of the people," he is taken to be "the voice of God."

## 177.

WHAT ALL ART WANTS TO DO AND CANNOT.—The final and hardest life's mission of the artist is to show what stays the same, what rests calmly in itself, what is noble and simple and free from anything strange or showy. That is why weaker artists reject the noblest forms of moral perfection as "not artistic": seeing these fruits hurts their ambition too much. The fruit shines down at them from the highest branches of art, but they don't have the ladder, the courage, or the strong grip to climb that high. In itself, a poet who is like the great Greek sculptor Phidias is quite possible. But if we look at how strong people are today, it is possible almost only in the sense that nothing is impossible for God. Even wishing for a poet who would be like the painter Claude Lorrain is already asking too much right now, no matter how deeply one person's heart may long for that to happen.—Up to now, showing the highest kind of human being, the simplest and at the same time the most complete, has been beyond the reach of every artist. But perhaps the Greeks, in their ideal of the goddess Athene, saw further than anyone before or after them.

## 178.

ART AND TURNING BACK THE CLOCK.—In history there are backward movements, the so-called periods of restoration. They try to bring back the ways of thinking and the social conditions that existed before the ones that came just before them. And they really do seem to succeed in bringing them back to life for a short time. These periods have the charm of sentimental memory, of burning longing for something that is almost lost, of quickly hugging a happiness that will not last. Because of this strange pull toward seriousness, art and poetry grow naturally in these short-lived, almost dreamlike times, just as the most delicate and rarest plants grow on very steep mountain slopes.—So many a good artist is pushed, without realizing it,

toward a "turn back the clock" way of thinking about politics and society. For himself, he sets up a quiet little corner and garden there. In it he gathers around himself what is left of the people of the historical age he loves, and he plays his lyre to many who are dead, half-dead, and tired to death—perhaps with the result mentioned above: bringing them back to life for a short while.

**179.**

THE LUCK OF OUR TIME.—In two ways, our time can be called a lucky one. When it comes to the past, we get to enjoy all the cultures that ever existed and everything they made. We feed ourselves on the finest life-blood of every age. We are close enough to the magic of the forces that gave birth to those ages that, as we pass by, we can let ourselves fall under their spell, with both pleasure and fear. Earlier cultures, by contrast, could only enjoy themselves. They never looked beyond themselves. It was as if each of them lived under a bell-shaped dome, sometimes wider, sometimes narrower. Light did shine down to them through it, but their eyes could not see through it. When it comes to the future, for the first time a huge, wide view opens up before us: a view of human and economic goals that wrap around the whole inhabited earth. At the same time, we feel that we have the power to take on this new life's mission ourselves, without being arrogant and without needing help from anything supernatural. Yes, whatever comes of our efforts, and however much we may have overestimated our strength, at least we owe an explanation to no one but ourselves. From now on, humanity can start to do with itself whatever it wants.—It is true that there are some odd human bees who only know how to suck the most bitter and worst parts out of the cup of every flower. It is true that every flower holds something that is not honey. But these bees may be allowed to feel about the luck of our

time in their own way, and to keep on building their hive of unhappiness.

**180.**

A VISION.—Here is what I picture. There would be hours of teaching and quiet thinking for grown-ups, even the most mature ones. People would go to these places not because they are forced to, but because the whole community expects it of them as a moral duty. The churches would be the meeting places for this, since they are the most worthy places and the richest in memories. At the same time, there would be daily celebrations in honour of human reason, both the reason people have already reached and the reason they are still able to reach. And the ideal of the teacher would bud and bloom again, newer and fuller than before. In this new teacher, the priest, the artist, the doctor, the scientist, and the wise man would all be blended together. Their separate strengths would come forward as one shared strength in the way they teach: in their lessons, in their talks, in their methods. This is the vision that keeps coming back to me. I firmly believe it has lifted one corner of the curtain that hides the future.

**181.**

EDUCATION BENDS PEOPLE OUT OF SHAPE.—The whole system of education is amazingly random. That is why every adult today says that the only teacher he really had was chance. Education's methods and goals also keep turning this way and that, like a weathervane in the wind. This can be explained as follows. The oldest and the newest forces in culture behave like people at a rowdy mass meeting. They would rather be heard than understood. They want to prove, at any cost, by their shouting and yelling, that they still exist, or that they already exist. The poor teachers and educators are first stunned by this senseless noise. Then they fall silent. Finally they stop caring

altogether. They let anything at all be done to them, just as they in turn let anything at all be done to their pupils. They were never properly trained themselves, so how could they train anyone else? They are not straight, strong, healthy trees full of sap. Anyone who wants to grow along them, like a vine on a tree, has to twist and bend himself, and in the end becomes just as crooked and misshapen as they are.

**182.**

THE PHILOSOPHERS AND ARTISTS OF OUR TIME.—Wild excitement and coldness, burning desires and a heart whose warmth is fading—this miserable mixture is what you see in the picture of the highest level of European society today. In that world, the artist thinks he is doing something great when his art lights the torch of the heart and also the torch of desire. The philosopher thinks the same about himself. His heart is chilly, just like the heart of his whole age, and with his judgments that reject the world, he cools down the hot desires in himself and in his followers.

**183.**

DON'T BE A FIGHTER FOR CULTURE UNLESS YOU HAVE TO.—At last people are learning something that costs us dearly not to know when we are young. First, we must do excellent things ourselves. Second, we must look for what is excellent wherever it can be found, and under whatever name it goes by. We must right away step aside from everything bad and mediocre, without fighting it. And even having a doubt about whether something is really good (the kind of doubt that comes quickly to someone with trained taste) should count as a reason against it, and a reason to stay away from it completely. We must not be scared of the risk of sometimes making a mistake, and mixing up something good but hard to reach with some-

thing bad and flawed. Only a person who can do nothing better should go out and attack the world's evils as a fighter for culture. But those whose job is to support culture and spread its lessons will ruin themselves if they walk around armed for battle. With all their precautions, their night watches, and their bad dreams, they turn the peace of their home life and their artistic life into a dark, uneasy restlessness.

**184.**

HOW NATURAL HISTORY SHOULD BE TAUGHT.—Natural history should be told like the history of a war, a war won by the forces of morals and the mind in their campaign against worry, fooling oneself, laziness, superstition, and stupidity. It should be told in such a way that every reader or listener is constantly stirred up to strive for a healthy, sound mind and body, and for the feeling of joy. It should awaken in him the wish to be the heir of humanity and to carry its work forward, and an ever nobler urge for adventure. Up to now, natural history has not found its proper way of speaking. That is because the creative and gifted artists who are needed for this job have never shaken off a secret distrust of it, and above all have never wanted to learn a deep lesson from it. Still, we have to admit that the English have made wonderful progress toward this ideal in their science books for ordinary working people. But then, those books are written by their leading scholars, who are rich, well-rounded, and inspiring people, and not, as here in Germany, by average researchers.

**185.**

GENIUS IN HUMANITY AS A WHOLE.—Schopenhauer observed that genius lies in remembering our own experiences clearly, vividly, and as a connected whole. If that is so, then we could say that humanity as a whole is striving toward genius. We can see this in its drive to

know the whole of its past history. This drive is setting the modern age more and more apart from earlier ages. For the first time, it has knocked down the walls between nature and the mind, between humans and animals, and between morals and physics. A history that was understood perfectly would be the whole universe becoming aware of itself.

## 186.

THE WORSHIP OF CULTURE.—Great minds are given a frightening share of the all too human in their natures: their blind spots, their flaws, and their excesses. This happens so that their strong influence, which can easily become far too strong, is always kept in check, because these flaws make people distrust them. Everything that humanity needs to keep going is so huge, and calls for so many different kinds of strength, that mankind as a whole pays a heavy price for every one-sided passion such people try to push on us, whether in science, politics, art, or business. It has always been a great disaster for culture when human beings are worshipped. In this sense we can understand the rule in the law of Moses that forbids us to have any other gods except God.—Next to the worship of genius and of raw power, we must always set the worship of culture, to complete it and to heal its harm. This worship of culture can wisely value even the things that are material, lowly, mean, misunderstood, weak, flawed, one-sided, unfinished, untrue, and merely on the surface, even the wicked and the horrible. It can admit about all of them that *all this is necessary*. For the lasting harmony of everything human must never be lost. That harmony was reached through amazing hard work and strokes of luck, and it is just as much the work of giants and ants as it is the work of geniuses. And really, how could we do without that deep, everywhere-present, and often eerie bass line underneath? Without it, after all, a melody cannot be a melody.

## 187.

THE ANCIENT WORLD AND PLEASURE.—People in the ancient world knew better how to be joyful. We know better how to suffer less. They kept finding new reasons to feel happy and to hold festivals, and they used all their cleverness and careful thought to come up with them. We, on the other hand, put our minds to work on solving problems that aim at getting rid of pain and removing the things that make us uncomfortable. When life was full of suffering, the ancients tried to forget it, or somehow to turn the feeling into a pleasant one. In this way they tried to ease the pain without curing it. We go after the causes of suffering, and on the whole we prefer to prevent it before it starts.—Maybe we are only laying the foundation on which some later age will once again build the temple of joy.

## 188.

THE MUSES AS LIARS.—"We know how to tell many lies." That is what the Muses once sang when they showed themselves to the poet Hesiod.—Once you grasp the idea that the artist is a deceiver, it leads to important discoveries.

## 189.

HOW STRANGE AND CONTRADICTORY HOMER CAN BE.—Is there anything more hopeless, more horrible, more unbelievable, shining down on human fate like a cold winter sun, than this idea of Homer's:

"So the gods decided it, and they doomed people to die, so that it might become something to sing about, even for generations far in the future"?

In other words, we suffer and die so that poets will never run out of things to write about. And this is the plan of those very gods of Homer, who seem to care a great deal about the happiness of future generations, but very little about us people living now. Imagine that such ideas could ever have come into the head of a Greek!

**190.**

EXISTENCE JUSTIFIED AFTER THE FACT.—Many ideas came into the world as mistakes and fantasies, but later turned out to be true, because people afterwards gave them a real foundation to stand on.

**191.**

BOTH FOR AND AGAINST ARE NEEDED.—Anyone who has not understood that every great man must not only be encouraged, but also, for the good of everyone, opposed, is surely still a big child—or else a great man himself.

**192.**

THE UNFAIRNESS OF GENIUS.—A genius is most unfair toward other geniuses, if they live at the same time. Either the genius thinks it doesn't need them and sees them as unnecessary (since it can manage without them), or their influence gets in the way of its own electric current, its flow of energy, and then it even calls them harmful.

**193.**

THE SADDEST FATE OF A PROPHET.—He has worked for twenty years to convince the people of his time, and at last he succeeds. But in the meantime his opponents have succeeded too—he is no longer convinced of his own ideas.

**194.**

THREE THINKERS LIKE ONE SPIDER.—In every school of philosophy, three thinkers come one after another in this pattern. The first one produces juice and seed out of himself. The second one pulls it out into threads and spins a clever web. The third one waits in this web for the victims who get caught in it—and tries to make a living off this philosophy.

**195.**

FROM SPENDING TIME WITH AUTHORS.—It is just as bad a habit to go around holding an author by the nose, letting him be led anywhere, as holding him by the horn, fighting him at his sharpest point (and every author has his horn).

**196.**

A PAIR THAT GO TOGETHER.—Fuzzy thinking and bursts of sentimentality are often joined, as if married, to a reckless desire to get your own way by any means at all, and to make yourself the only one who matters. In the same way, a truly helpful, gracious, and kind spirit is often joined to the urge toward clear and clean thinking, and toward calm feelings and self-control.

**197.**

FORCES THAT JOIN AND FORCES THAT DIVIDE.—Surely it is in people's heads that the force arises that joins them together—an understanding of what they have in common, or the opposite. And it is in their hearts that the force arises that pulls them apart—a blind choosing and fumbling about in love and hate, a devotion to one person at the cost of everyone else, and as a result, a contempt for what is useful to all.

**198.**

SHOOTERS AND THINKERS.—There are odd shooters who miss their target, but leave the shooting range secretly proud that at least their bullet flew very far (past the target, true enough), or that it didn't hit the target but hit something else. There are thinkers of the same kind.

**199.**

ATTACK FROM TWO SIDES.—We behave like enemies toward a way of thinking or a movement in two cases. One is when we are above it and disapprove of its goal. The other is when its goal is too high for us to see or recognize—in other words, when it is above us. So the same group can be attacked from two sides, from above and from below. Quite often the attackers, joined by their shared hatred, form an alliance that is more disgusting than anything they hate.

**200.**

ORIGINAL.—What makes a mind original is not being the first to see something new. It is seeing something old and well known, which everyone sees and overlooks, as if it were new. The first discoverer is usually that very ordinary and unthinking dreamer—chance.

**201.**

THE MISTAKE OF PHILOSOPHERS.—The philosopher believes that the value of his philosophy lies in the whole thing, in its overall structure. Later generations find its value in the stones he built with, which people will use from then on to build more often and better. In other words, its value lies in the fact that the building can be torn down and still be useful as building material.

**202.**

WIT.—Wit is the words carved on the gravestone of a feeling.

**203.**

THE MOMENT BEFORE THE ANSWER.—In science it happens every day and every hour that a person gets stuck right before the solution, convinced that all his work has been completely wasted. He is like someone untying a knotted rope who stops just at the moment when it is closest to coming loose, because at that very moment it looks most like a tight knot.

**204.**

AMONG THE DREAMERS.—A thoughtful person, someone who is sure of his own good sense, can gain a lot by spending ten years among wild dreamers and letting himself go, in their hot and feverish world, into a mild kind of madness. In this way he will have traveled a good part of the road toward a mind that is at home everywhere, a mind that can say without being boastful, "Nothing of the mind is foreign to me."

**205.**

SHARP, FRESH AIR.—The best and healthiest thing about science, as in the mountains, is the sharp, fresh air that blows around it.—Soft, pampered minds (such as artists) fear science and insult it because of this chilly air.

**206.**

WHY SCHOLARS ARE NOBLER THAN ARTISTS.—Science needs nobler characters than poetry does. It needs people who are simpler,

less ambitious, more restrained, calmer, who care less about being famous after they die, and who can bury themselves in studies that, in the eyes of most people, hardly seem worth such a sacrifice of oneself. There is another loss that they are aware of. The kind of work they do, which always demands the greatest soberness and calm, weakens their will. The fire is not kept burning as strongly as it is in the fireplaces of poetic minds. Because of this, they often lose their strength and their best years earlier than artists do—and, as was said, they know about this danger. In every situation they seem less gifted because they shine less, and so they will always be valued less than they are really worth.

**207.**

HOW FAR DEVOTION HIDES THE TRUTH.—In later centuries, people give the great man credit for all the great qualities and virtues of his whole century. So the best of everything keeps getting hidden by devotion. Devotion treats the great man's picture like a holy image, and surrounds it with all kinds of gifts and offerings, the way people leave gifts at a shrine. In the end, the picture is completely veiled and buried under the offerings. From then on, people believe in it more than they actually look at it and think about it.

**208.**

STANDING ON YOUR HEAD.—When we turn the truth upside down, we usually don't notice that our own head isn't the right way up either.

**209.**

WHERE FASHION COMES FROM AND WHAT IT'S GOOD FOR.—When one person is clearly pleased with the way he looks and

presents himself, others start copying him. Little by little, this creates a look that many people share—and that is fashion. The many want that same comforting feeling of being happy with how they look, and they actually get it. Just think how many reasons every person has to feel anxious, to be shy, and to hide himself. Think how, because of this, three-quarters of his energy and goodwill gets crippled and may end up producing nothing! So we should be very grateful to fashion. It sets that three-quarters free. It gives self-confidence and the ability to get along cheerfully with others to everyone who feels tied to everyone else by fashion's rules. Even foolish rules give people freedom and peace of mind, as long as lots of people have agreed to follow them.

**210.**

TONGUE-LOOSENERS.—The value of many people and many books lies only in one ability: they make everyone speak out about their most hidden and private things. They loosen tongues. They are like crowbars that pry open even the most tightly shut mouths. Many events and wrongdoings that seem to have been sent only as a curse on humanity actually have this value and this use.

**211.**

FREEDOM OF THE MIND TO ROAM.(12)—Which of us would dare to call himself a "free thinker" if he were not willing to honor, in his own way, the people who have been insulted with that very name? That means taking on his own shoulders part of the public's dislike and abuse that falls on them. We might just as well call ourselves, quite seriously, "free-roaming minds" (in German, *Freizügig*)—and without any proud or cocky defiance. We would call ourselves that because we feel the pull toward freedom (*Zug zur Freiheit*) as the strongest instinct of our minds. And unlike minds that are fixed and

limited, we pretty much see our ideal in a wandering of the mind—to use a modest, almost self-belittling phrase.

**212.**

YES, THE FAVOR OF THE MUSES!—What Homer says about this goes straight to our hearts, because it is so true and so terrible:

"The Muse loved him with all her heart and gave him both good and bad: she took away his eyes, and she granted him sweet song."

This line gives thinking people endless things to think about. She gives good and bad—that is *her* way of loving with all her heart and soul! And each person will work out for himself why we poets and thinkers have to give up our eyes in her service.(13)

**213.**

AGAINST TRAINING IN MUSIC.—Training the eye in art from childhood on—through drawing, painting, sketching landscapes, figures, and scenes—brings a valuable benefit for life. It makes a person's eyesight sharp, calm, and patient when watching people and situations. Training the ear in art brings no similar side benefit. So public schools would generally do well to give the art of the eye priority over the art of the ear.

**214.**

THE DISCOVERERS OF THE OBVIOUS.—Very sharp, subtle minds, which are about as far from trivial things as anything can be, often discover something trivial after taking all kinds of roundabout routes and steep mountain paths. And then, to the amazement of ordinary minds, they are overjoyed about it.

## 215.

THE MORALS OF SCHOLARS.—Science can only move forward steadily and quickly if each person is forced to not be so suspicious that he checks every calculation and claim made by others in fields far from his own. But there is one necessary condition: every person must have rivals in his own field who are extremely suspicious and keep a sharp eye on him. Out of this pairing—"not too suspicious" and "extremely suspicious"—comes honesty in the world of learning.

## 216.

WHY SOME MINDS PRODUCE NOTHING.—There are very gifted minds that never produce anything, only because their temperament is weak. They are too impatient to wait until their ideas have grown inside them, like a baby that needs time before it can be born.

## 217.

THE UPSIDE-DOWN WORLD OF TEARS.—The many discomforts that the demands of higher culture cause a person end up twisting his nature so much that he usually keeps himself tough and unbending, never showing pain. So he saves his tears only for rare moments of happiness. Because of this, many people have to cry even just at the pleasure of not being in pain—only when he is happy does his heart still really beat.

## 218.

THE GREEKS AS GO-BETWEENS.—When we talk about the Greeks, we are without realizing it talking about today and yesterday. Their history, which everyone knows, is like a blank mirror: it always reflects something that isn't actually in the mirror itself. We enjoy the freedom to talk about the Greeks so that we have the right to stay

silent about other people—so that these Greeks themselves can whisper something into the ear of the thoughtful reader. In this way, the Greeks make it easier for modern people to share many things that are disputed and hard to say openly.

**219.**

HOW THE GREEKS EARNED THEIR CHARACTER.—The Greeks are famous for being clear, open, simple, and orderly. Their naturalness and their art seem as pure and clear as crystal. Because of this, we are easily fooled into thinking that all these gifts were simply handed to them at birth. For example, Lichtenberg once said that they could not help but write well. But no claim could be more rushed or harder to defend. Look at the history of Greek prose, from Gorgias to Demosthenes. It shows a long, hard struggle to move toward the light, away from writing that was murky, overloaded, and lacking in taste. It reminds us of the work of heroes who had to build the very first roads through forests and swamps. The spoken dialogue in tragedy was the playwright's true achievement, because it was so unusually clear and exact. Meanwhile, the natural habit of the Greek people was to wallow in symbols and hidden hints, and the great choral songs openly encouraged that habit. In the same way, Homer's achievement was to free the Greeks from Asian showiness and gloom, and to reach a clearness like that of good architecture, in both big and small details. And people did not think at all that it was easy to say something in a pure, clear style. Otherwise, how could we explain why they admired the short poems of Simonides so much? His poems look so simple. They have no golden tricks and no fancy curls of wit. They just say plainly everything they need to say, calmly, like the steady sun, not straining for effect like a flash of lightning. Struggling toward the light, out of a dimness that was almost their natural state, is a truly Greek thing. That is why a shiver of joy ran through the

people whenever they heard a short, sharp sentence, the language of the elegy, or the sayings of the Seven Wise Men. That is also why they loved giving rules for living in verse, a habit we find annoying. For the Greek spirit, this was its true mission in the spirit of Apollo, the god of light and order: to rise above the dangers of rhythm and rhyme, and above the murkiness that poetry usually has. Simplicity, flexibility, and self-control were things this people had to fight for. Nature did not give them these things. The danger of sliding back into Asian ways always hung over the Greeks. And now and then it really did overtake them, like a dark, flooding tide of mystical urges, primitive wildness, and darkness. We see them dive in. We see Europe, so to speak, flooded and washed away, because Europe was very small back then. But they always come back up into the light, because they are good swimmers and divers, these countrymen of Odysseus.

**220.**

THE PAGAN TRAIT.—For someone studying the Greek world, perhaps nothing is more surprising than this: now and then the Greeks held festivals, so to speak, for all their passions and bad tendencies alike. In fact, the State even ordered a whole series of festivals for their "all too human" side. This is the pagan trait of their world. Christianity has never understood it and never can understand it, and it has always fought against it and looked down on it. The Greeks accepted this all too human side as something that could not be avoided. Instead of cursing it, they chose to give it a kind of second-class right, by weaving it into the customs of society and religion. Everything in human beings that has power, they called divine, and they wrote it on the walls of their heaven. They do not deny the natural instinct that shows itself in bad traits. Instead, they control it and limit it to certain rituals and certain days. That way, after setting up enough safety measures, they steer those wild streams into a path

that does as little harm as possible. That is the root of all the moral open-mindedness of the ancient world. There was still, deep in Greek nature, something wicked, doubtful, backward, and animal-like, something barbaric, older than the Greeks, and Asian. The Greeks let it flow out in moderate amounts, and did not try to wipe it out completely. The whole system was run by the State. And the State was not built on single individuals or on social classes, but on qualities all humans share. In the way they built the State, the Greeks show an amazing sense for the typical facts of life. Later, this same sense allowed them to become students of nature, historians, geographers, and philosophers. What decided how the State was set up and how it worshipped was not some narrow moral code of priests or classes. It was the widest possible view of the reality of everything human. Where did the Greeks get this freedom, this sense of reality? Perhaps from Homer and the poets who came before him. Poets are usually not the wisest or the fairest people by nature. But to make up for that, they take delight in reality and in every kind of activity, and they would rather not deny even evil. It is enough for them if evil keeps itself in check and does not kill everything or poison it from the inside. In other words, these poets had ideas similar to those of the men who founded the Greek constitutions, and they were their teachers and the ones who paved the way for them.

**221.**

UNUSUAL GREEKS.—In Greece, deep, thorough, serious minds were the exception. The national instinct tended instead to see seriousness and thoroughness as a kind of pulling faces, something put on. To borrow forms from outside, not to invent but to reshape them into the most beautiful shapes—that is Greek. To imitate, not to be useful but to create the beautiful illusion of art; again and again to win out over forced seriousness; to arrange, to make beautiful, to simplify—

that is the ongoing mission from Homer all the way to the Sophists of the third and fourth centuries after Christ. These Sophists are all outward show, grand speeches, and dramatic gestures, and they speak to shallow souls who care only about looks, sound, and effect. And now let us measure the greatness of those unusual Greeks who created science! Whoever tells their story is telling the most heroic story of the human mind!

**222.**

SIMPLE THINGS DO NOT COME FIRST, NOR DO THEY COME LAST.—When people study the history of religious ideas, they often get the order of development wrong. They line things up as steps, one growing out of the other, when in fact these things happened at the same time but separately. In particular, simplicity still has far too much of a reputation for being the oldest thing, the thing that came at the start. But a lot of what is human comes about by taking away and splitting apart, and not only by doubling, adding, and joining together. —For example, people still believe that the idea of God slowly developed, starting from clumsy stones and blocks of wood and rising all the way up to gods shaped fully like humans. But the truth is this: as long as people saw and felt something divine in trees, logs, stones, and animals, they backed away from giving those gods human shapes. To them, that would have been an act against God. It was the poets who first had to get people's inner imagination used to this idea and willing to accept it. The poets did this without caring about worship or about the religious shame that forbade it. Whenever more religious times and ways of thinking took over, this freeing influence of the poets faded into the background. Holiness stayed, just as before, on the side of the monstrous, the creepy, and the strangely inhuman. On top of that, much of what our inner imagination dares to picture would be painful to see if it were shown outside us, in a real body.

The inner eye is much bolder and has much less shame than the outer eye. (That is why it is well known to be hard, and sometimes impossible, to turn a long story-poem into a play for the stage.) For a long time, the religious imagination flatly refuses to believe that God and an image of God are the same thing. The image is meant to hold the god's holy presence in one real, specific place, though in a mysterious way that cannot be fully understood. The oldest images of the gods were meant both to shelter the god and to hide him(14). They pointed to him, but did not put him on show. No Greek truly thought his god Apollo was a pointed wooden pillar, or that his god Eros was a lump of stone. These were symbols, and they were meant to make people afraid of the god showing himself. It was the same with those blocks of wood that had single body parts roughly carved out of them, usually far too many. One example is an Apollo from Laconia with four hands and four ears. Something unfinished, symbolic, or too much carries a frightening holiness. It is meant to stop us from thinking of anything human, or anything like a human. These things were not made because art was still in its baby stage. It is not as if people back then, when such images were worshipped, were unable to speak more clearly and make things look more lifelike! No, there was one thing people were afraid of: saying it straight out. Think of the inner room of a temple, which hides the holiest place, the god's real presence, in a mysterious half-darkness, though not completely. And think of the row of columns around the temple, which hides that inner room and protects it from nosy eyes like a screen and a veil, though again not completely. The image of the god works in the same way: it shows the god and hides the god at the same time.—Things changed only outside of worship, in the everyday world of sports contests. There, joy in the winner rose so high that its ripples spread out and stirred the lake of religious feeling. Only then was the winner's statue put up in front of the temple. Then the faithful pilgrim, whether he liked it or not, had to get his eyes and his soul used to seeing human

beauty and great strength, which he could not avoid. In this way, through bodily and spiritual closeness, the worship of humans and the worship of gods melted into one another. Then, for the first time, people lost their fear of truly giving the gods human shapes. The great stage for the art of sculpture opened up. Even then there was a limit: wherever a figure was to be worshipped, the old primitive shape and its ugliness were carefully kept and copied. But now the Greek, as he dedicates and makes his offerings, may enjoy, with religion's approval, his delight in turning a god into a man.

**223.**

WHERE WE MUST TRAVEL.—Watching ourselves directly is not nearly enough for us to learn to know ourselves. We need history, because the past keeps flowing through us in a hundred channels. In fact, we ourselves are nothing more than what we feel at each moment of this ongoing flow. Even when we want to step down into the stream of our own development, which seems so special and personal, the short saying of the Greek thinker Heraclitus still holds true: "You cannot step into the same river twice."—This bit of wisdom has slowly become a worn-out cliché, yet it has stayed just as strong and true as it always was. The same goes for another saying: to understand history, we must closely study the living leftovers of past ages. We must travel, as the old Greek historian Herodotus did, to other peoples. This is especially true of the so-called savage or half-savage peoples, in places where people have taken off European clothes, or never put them on. For these peoples are old, solid steps of culture on which we can stand. But there is a finer art and purpose in traveling, one that does not always require us to move from place to place and go thousands of miles away. Very likely the last three hundred years, with all their shades and bent reflections of culture, still live on near us. We just have to discover them. In some families, or even in single

people, the layers still sit one on top of another, beautifully and clearly visible. In other places the layers are scattered and shifted out of place, which makes them harder to understand. Certainly in far-off areas and little-known mountain valleys, small closed communities have found it easier to keep a wonderful example of a much older way of feeling, and that example should be studied there. On the other hand, such discoveries are not likely to be made in Berlin, where people come into the world faded and drained of life. Picture the giant Argus of Greek myth, who had a hundred eyes and kept watch over the maiden Io. Whoever has practiced this art of travel for a long time becomes like that hundred-eyed Argus, and he will follow his Io—I mean his ego, his own self—everywhere. In Egypt and Greece, in Byzantium and Rome, in France and Germany, in the age of wandering peoples or settled ones, in the Renaissance or the Reformation, at home and abroad, in the sea, the forest, the plants, and the mountains, he will keep finding the travel adventures of this self that is always growing and always changing.—In this way, knowing yourself turns into knowing everything about the whole past. And by another chain of thought, which can only be hinted at here, the way the freest and most far-seeing minds guide and train themselves could become a way of guiding all of humanity in the future.

**224.**

HEALING CREAM AND POISON.—We can never think hard enough about this fact: Christianity is the religion of the ancient world after it had grown old. It assumes worn-out, aging peoples with an old culture, and on them it could work, and still can work, like a soothing healing cream. There are times when people's ears and eyes are so clogged with slime that they can no longer hear the voice of reason and philosophy, or see wisdom walking around in a living body, whether that wise person is called Epictetus or Epicurus. At such

times, perhaps, raising up the martyr's cross and blowing the "trumpet of the last judgment" may still have the power to inspire such peoples to end their lives in a decent way. If we think of Rome as the poet Juvenal described it, that poisonous toad with the beautiful eyes of Venus, we understand what it means to make the sign of the Cross in front of the world. Then we respect the quiet Christian community and feel grateful that it smothered the Greek and Roman Empire. If, in those days, most people really were born as slaves in their minds, with the lusts of old men, what a pleasure it must have been to meet beings who were more soul than body. They seemed to make real the Greek idea of the ghosts of the underworld: shy, hurrying, chirping, kindly creatures, who had a claim on a "better life" to come, and who were therefore so modest, so quietly scornful, and so proudly patient! —This Christianity was like the evening bell of the good old ancient world, a cracked, tired, and yet still musical bell. It soothes the ears even of someone who only travels through those centuries today by studying history. Think what it must have meant to the people who lived then!—But to young and fresh barbarian nations, Christianity is a poison. Planting the teaching of sin and damnation in the heroic, childlike, animal-like soul of the old Germans is nothing but poisoning them. The result could only be a huge chemical bubbling and breaking down, a jumble of feelings and judgments, a wild overgrowth of fantastic legends, and so, in the long run, a deep weakening of these barbarian peoples. True, without this weakening, what would we have left of Greek culture, or of the whole cultured past of the human race? For the barbarians who had not been touched by Christianity knew very well how to wipe out old cultures completely. The pagan conquerors of Roman Britain showed this all too clearly. So Christianity, without wanting to, was forced to help make "the ancient world" live forever.—However, there is still a question on the other side, and the possibility of adding things up the other way. If these fresh peoples, the Germans for example, had not been weakened by

this poisoning, might they slowly have found on their own a higher culture, one of their own, a new one? If so, humanity has now lost even the faintest idea of what that culture would have been.—Here, as in every such case, we simply do not know, to put it in Christian terms, whether God owes the devil more thanks, or the devil owes God more thanks, for everything turning out the way it did.

**225.**

FAITH MAKES PEOPLE HOLY AND DAMNS THEM.—A Christian who wandered onto forbidden paths of thought might one day ask himself this: Is it really necessary for there to be a God, along with a Lamb who stands in for us, if simply believing that these beings exist is enough to produce the same effects? And if they do exist after all, aren't they unnecessary? Everything the Christian religion gives to the human soul comes from the belief, not from the things believed in. That goes for everything helpful, comforting, and uplifting, and just as much for everything that depresses and crushes. It is the same here as in another well-known case. There were really no witches, but the terrible effects of believing in witches were the same as if witches had truly existed. Whenever a Christian waits for God to step in directly, and waits for nothing (because there is no God), his religion is clever enough to come up with excuses and reasons for him to stay calm. In that sense Christianity is a clever religion.—It is true that faith has so far not managed to move real mountains, although I don't know who ever thought it could. But it can put mountains where there are none.

**226.**

THE TRAGIC COMEDY OF REGENSBURG.—Now and then we can see, with frightening clearness, the clown show that Fortune puts on. We see how she ties the rope on which future centuries must dance to just a few days, a single place, and the state and opinions of one single

brain. In this way, the fate of modern German history was decided in the days of that great debate at Regensburg. At that moment, it seemed certain that church and moral matters would be settled peacefully, with no religious wars and no counter-reformation, and that the German nation would stay united. For one moment, the deep and gentle mind of Contarini floated above the quarrel of the theologians and won the day. He stood for the more mature Italian kind of faith, and he carried the morning light of free thinking. But Luther's hard head, full of suspicions and odd fears, pushed back. Luther saw justification by grace as his own greatest motto and discovery, so he did not believe it when Italians said it. In fact, as everyone knows, they had come up with the idea much earlier and had quietly spread it all over Italy. Luther saw this seeming agreement as the devil's trick, and he blocked the peace effort as hard as he could, and by doing so he greatly helped the Empire's enemies.—And now, to get an even stronger sense of how horribly ridiculous it all was, let us add this: none of the ideas people argued about at Regensburg is true in any way, or even has anything to do with truth. Not original sin, not being saved by someone else taking our place, not being made right with God through faith. Today they are all seen as things that cannot even be debated. And yet the world was set on fire because of them, that is, because of opinions that match no real things at all. On the other hand, with purely language questions, such as what the holy words spoken at Communion mean, debate is at least allowed, because in that case the truth can actually be stated. But "where there is nothing, even truth has lost her rights."(15)—Finally, one last thing must be said. It is true that these ideas give rise to sources of power so mighty that, without them, all the mills of the modern world could not be driven with such force. And what matters most is force, and truth comes only second (and maybe not even second)—isn't that right, my dear modern friends?

## 227.

GOETHE'S MISTAKES.—Goethe stands out among great artists in one striking way. He did not stay inside the narrow limits of what he was truly able to do, as if that ability had to be the most important, the most special, the absolute and final thing about him, both for himself and for the whole world. Twice in his life he aimed to have something higher than he really had. In the second half of his life he went off track, because he seems fully convinced that he is one of the great scientific discoverers, someone who sheds light on nature. In the same way, in the first half of his life, he demanded of himself something that seemed higher to him than the art of poetry, and already here he made a mistake. His secret, one that glowed and burned inside him, was that he believed nature wanted to make him a visual artist, someone who paints or sculpts. This secret finally drove him to Italy, so that he could give free rein to this obsession and make every possible sacrifice for it. In the end, clever as he was, and honestly unwilling to let his own mind be twisted, he realized something. He saw that a tricky little spirit of desire had lured him into believing this was his calling, and that he had to free himself from the greatest passion of his heart and say goodbye to it. The painful certainty that he had to say goodbye tore and gnawed at him deep inside, and it is fully expressed in the character of Tasso in his play of that name. Tasso is like a stronger version of Werther, the sad hero of his earlier novel. Over Tasso hangs the feeling that something worse than death is coming, as when someone says: "Now it is over, after this goodbye. How will I go on living without going mad?" These two basic mistakes of his life gave Goethe a special freedom. In the face of a purely bookish, literary way of treating poetry, which was the only way the world knew back then, they let him stand relaxed and unembarrassed, in a position that looked almost as if he did whatever he pleased. Leave aside the time when Schiller drove away Goethe's shy

fear of poetry, his fear of all literary life and all the craft of writing. (Poor Schiller, who never had time for himself and left no time for anyone else.) Apart from that period, Goethe seems like an ancient Greek who visits his beloved now and then, while wondering whether she might really be a goddess whose proper name he cannot say. In all his poetry you can sense that visual art and Nature are close by, inspiring him. The faces of the figures that floated before his eyes—and perhaps he always thought he was following the changing shapes of one single goddess—became, without his wanting or knowing it, the faces of all the characters his art gave birth to. Without these wild, overblown mistakes, he would not have been Goethe. And Goethe is the only German writer-artist who has not yet gone out of date, precisely because he wanted just as little to be a writer by profession as to be a German by profession.

**228.**

TRAVELLERS AND THEIR LEVELS.—We can tell apart five levels of travellers. The first and lowest level is made up of those who travel and are seen by others. They really do become well-travelled, but they are, in a way, blind. Next come those who truly see the world. The third group goes through the results of what they have seen; it actually changes them. The fourth group weaves what they have experienced into their lives and carries it with them from then on. Finally, there are some people of the greatest strength. As soon as they come home, they simply must work out, in the way they live and in what they create, everything they have seen, lived through, and taken into themselves.—Just like these five kinds of travellers, all of humanity makes the whole long journey of life. The lowest simply let things happen to them. The highest are those who act and fully live out their lives, without holding back any leftover bit of what they have experienced inside.

**229.**

WHEN WE CLIMB HIGHER.—As soon as we climb higher than the people who used to admire us, we look to them as if we have sunk and fallen. That is because they believed that, no matter what, they were up on the heights together with us (and maybe also thanks to us).

**230.**

BALANCE AND SELF-CONTROL.—There are two very noble things, balance and self-control, and it is best never to talk about them. A few people know how powerful and meaningful they are, because they learned it along the secret paths of their own inner experiences and life-changing turns. These people honour in balance and self-control something truly godlike, and they are afraid to speak about it out loud. Everyone else barely listens when these things are discussed, and thinks the topic is boring and ordinary. We should perhaps make an exception for those who once heard a warning sound coming from that realm but blocked their ears against it. Remembering it makes them angry and irritated.

**231.**

THE HUMAN SIDE OF FRIENDSHIP AND COMPANIONSHIP.—"If you take the left side, then I will go to the right."(16) That attitude is the true mark of humanity when people are close to each other. Without that attitude, every friendship, every group of followers or students, sooner or later turns into a fake.

**232.**

THE DEEP THINKERS.—People who think deeply feel like actors when they are with others. That is because, in order to be understood, they always have to pretend to be shallow.

**233.**

FOR THOSE WHO LOOK DOWN ON "HUMAN CROWDS."—Anyone who sees people as a crowd of cattle, and runs away from them as fast as he can, will surely be caught by them and stabbed on their horns.

**234.**

THE WORST OFFENCE AGAINST VAIN PEOPLE.—In company, if you give someone a chance to show off his knowledge, feelings, and experience in a good light, you place yourself above him. Unless the other person feels you are superior to him in every way, without limits, you are guilty of attacking his vanity, even though what you were trying to do was to please that other man's vanity.

**235.**

DISAPPOINTMENT.—When a man has lived a long, active life, known for his speeches and writings, his personality becomes public. Then meeting him in person is usually disappointing, for two reasons. First, people expect too much from a short meeting. They expect everything that only the thousand and one situations of a whole life could bring out in him. Second, no one who is already well known bothers to try to win approval from each single person he meets. He is too relaxed, and we are too keyed up.

**236.**

TWO SOURCES OF KINDNESS.—Treating everyone with the same good mood, and being kind to all people without picking and choosing, can come just as much from a deep contempt for humanity as from a love of humanity that is rooted deep inside.

**237.**

THE WANDERER IN THE MOUNTAINS TALKS TO HIMSELF.—There are certain signs that you have gone further and higher. The view in front of you is freer and wider. The air blowing in your face is cooler, yet gentler. (You have unlearned the foolish habit of mixing up gentleness with warmth.) Your steps are firmer and stronger, and your courage and your good sense have grown together. For all these reasons your journey may now be lonelier, and in any case more dangerous, than before. But perhaps not as dangerous as the people believe who, from down in the misty valley, watch you, the wanderer, striding across the mountains.

**238.**

EXCEPT FOR OUR NEIGHBOUR.—I admit that my head is put on my neck the wrong way, but only in my own case. After all, as everyone knows, every other person knows better than I do what I should do or not do. The only one who cannot help me is me, poor beggar that I am! Aren't we all like statues that have had the wrong heads stuck on them? Right, dear neighbour?—Ah, no; you, you alone, are the exception!

**239.**

BE CAREFUL.—With people who have no respect for other people as persons, we have two choices. Either we don't spend time with them

at all, or, before we do, we firmly tie them down with the handcuffs of good manners and fixed rules, and we don't let up.

**240.**

WANTING TO LOOK VAIN.—Sometimes, when talking with strangers or people we barely know, a person shares only their best thoughts. They talk about the famous people they know, and about their big experiences and travels. This is a sign that the person is not proud, or at least does not want to look proud. Vanity is the polite mask that pride wears.

**241.**

GOOD FRIENDSHIP.—A good friendship comes about when one person deeply respects the other, even more than he respects himself. He also loves the other, though not as much as he loves himself. And finally, to make spending time together easier, he knows how to add a thin, delicate coating of closeness, like a fresh shine on the surface. But at the same time he wisely holds back from true, real closeness, where the line between "mine" and "yours" gets blurred.

**242.**

FRIENDS AS GHOSTS.—If we change ourselves deeply, our friends, who have not changed, turn into ghosts of our own past. Their voices sound shadowy and frightening to us. It is as if we were hearing our own voice speaking, but younger, harsher, and less gentle.

**243.**

ONE EYE AND TWO LOOKS.—Some people have eyes that naturally beg for favors and for being let off easy. These same people, because

they have been put down so often and long for revenge, have also gotten used to putting on a shameless look.

**244.**

THE BLUR OF DISTANCE.—"A child all his life"—that sounds very sweet and touching. But it is only how things look from far away. When you see and know such a person up close, people always call him "childish all his life."

**245.**

GOOD AND BAD FROM THE SAME MISUNDERSTANDING.—When a sharp, subtle mind is silently puzzled, less subtle people usually take that silence as a quiet sense of being better than them, and they fear it a lot. Yet if they could see that the person was simply puzzled, it would make them feel friendly toward him.

**246.**

THE WISE MAN PRETENDING TO BE A FOOL.—Because the wise man is kind to people, he sometimes decides to pretend to be excited, angry, or overjoyed. He does this so that the coldness and cool reasoning of his true nature won't hurt the people around him.

**247.**

FORCING ONESELF TO PAY ATTENTION.—As soon as we notice that someone spending time or talking with us has to force himself to pay attention, we have enough proof that he does not love us, or does not love us anymore.

**248.**

THE ROAD TO A CHRISTIAN VIRTUE.—Learning from our enemies is the best way to love them, because it makes us feel grateful toward them.

**249.**

THE TRICK OF THE PUSHY PERSON.—The pushy person pays us back in gold coins when we have only handed him ordinary coins of politeness. By doing this he tries to force us later to treat our usual polite rules as a mistake, and to treat him as a special exception.

**250.**

WHY WE TAKE A DISLIKE.—We turn against many an artist or writer, not because we finally notice that he has fooled us, but because he didn't think he needed any cleverer tricks to trap us.

**251.**

WHEN PARTING.—It is not by the way one soul comes close to another, but by the way it parts from it, that I can tell how closely related and alike the two souls are.

**252.**

SILENCE.—We must not talk about our friends, or we give up the feeling of friendship.

**253.**

RUDENESS.—Rudeness is often a sign of awkward shyness. When this shyness is caught off guard, it panics and would like to hide that fact by being rude.

**254.**

HONESTY'S MISTAKE.—Sometimes the people we have only just met are the first to hear what we have kept hidden until now. We have the silly idea that showing them this trust is the strongest chain we could use to hold them close. But they don't know us well enough to feel how big a sacrifice it was for us to speak openly. So they pass our secrets on to others without any idea that they are betraying us. Because of this, we may lose our old friends.

**255.**

IN THE WAITING ROOM OF FAVOR.—Anyone we leave standing for a long time in the waiting room, waiting for our favor, starts to stew and bubble inside, or turns bitter.

**256.**

A WARNING TO THOSE WHO ARE LOOKED DOWN ON.—When we have clearly dropped in other people's opinion, we should hold on tooth and nail to modesty when we deal with them. Otherwise we will show others that we have dropped in our own opinion too. Being cynical and crude with others is a sign that, when a man is alone, he also treats himself like a dog.

**257.**

NOT KNOWING OFTEN MAKES US LOOK NOBLE.—When it comes to being respected by people who like to show respect, it helps to seem not to understand certain things. Not knowing also brings special privileges.

**258.**

THE ENEMY OF GRACE.—The impatient, arrogant man doesn't care for grace. He feels it is a physical, visible criticism of himself. That is because grace is a heartfelt patience with others, shown in the way we move and gesture.

**259.**

ON MEETING AGAIN.—When old friends meet again after a long time apart, they often pretend to be interested in things they stopped caring about long ago. Sometimes both of them notice this, but they don't dare lift the veil and say so, out of a sad doubt. That is how conversations come about that feel as if they were taking place in the land of the dead.

**260.**

MAKING FRIENDS ONLY WITH HARD WORKERS.—A man with too much free time is dangerous to his friends. Since he has nothing to do, he talks about what his friends are doing or not doing, he meddles, and in the end he becomes a nuisance. The smart person will only make friends with people who work hard.

**261.**

ONE WEAPON IS WORTH TWICE AS MUCH AS TWO.—It is an unfair fight when one man defends his cause with both his head and his heart, and the other with his head alone. The first man has, so to speak, the sun in his eyes and the wind against him, and his two weapons get in each other's way. He loses the prize—at least in the eyes of truth. It's true, though, that the second man's win with his one weapon seldom pleases the hearts of the other people watching, and it makes him unpopular.

**262.**

DEPTH AND MUDDY WATERS.—The public easily mixes up the person who fishes in muddy, stirred-up waters with the person who pumps water up from deep below.

**263.**

SHOWING OFF YOUR VANITY TO FRIEND AND ENEMY.—Out of vanity, many a man treats even his friends badly when there are people watching whom he wants to impress with how superior he is. Others exaggerate how great their enemies are, so they can proudly point out that they deserve to have such enemies.

**264.**

COOLING DOWN.—When the heart gets overheated, the head and our judgment usually get sick along with it. Anyone who, for a while, is worried about the health of his head must know what he needs to cool down, without worrying about what will happen to his heart later. Because if we are able to give warmth at all, we are sure to become warm again, and then we will have our summer.

**265.**

MIXED FEELINGS.—Women and self-centered artists have a feeling toward science that is made up of envy and sentimentality.

**266.**

WHERE THE DANGER IS GREATEST.—We rarely break a leg as long as life is a hard climb upward. The danger comes when we start taking things easy and choosing the comfortable paths.

**267.**

NOT TOO EARLY.—We must be careful not to become sharp too early, or we will also become thin too early, like a blade worn down too soon.

**268.**

PLEASURE IN A STUBBORN PUPIL.—A good teacher knows times when he feels proud that his pupil stays true to himself and stands against him. These are the times when the young person must not understand the older man, or would be hurt by understanding him.

**269.**

THE TEST OF HONESTY.—Young men who want to be more honest than they have been so far look for a victim: someone everyone agrees is honest. They attack him first, trying to rise to his level by insulting him. Behind this lies the idea that at least this first try carries no danger. For a man like that, an honest man, has no right to punish the rudeness of someone who is being honest with him.

**270.**

THE CHILD WHO NEVER GROWS UP.—Short-sighted as we are, we think that fairy tales and games belong to childhood. As if, at any age, we would want to live without fairy tales and games! It is true that our words and feelings change, but the basic fact stays the same. The child himself proves this, because he sees his games as his work and his fairy tales as his truth. Life is so short that this should keep us from making fussy distinctions between the different ages of life, as if every age brought something new. Someday a poet ought to describe a man who is two hundred years old, who really does live without fairy tales and games.

**271.**

EVERY PHILOSOPHY BELONGS TO A CERTAIN TIME OF LIFE.—A philosopher's teaching shows what time of life he was in when he found it. He cannot avoid this, no matter how far above time and the passing moment he may feel. So Schopenhauer's philosophy stays a mirror of his hot-blooded and gloomy youth. It is not a way of thinking for older men. Plato's philosophy reminds you of the mid-thirties, when a warm current and a cold current usually rush together. Then you get spray and soft clouds, and, if conditions are right and the sun breaks through, beautiful rainbow pictures.

**272.**

ABOUT THE MINDS OF WOMEN.—The best proof of a woman's mental strength is this: out of love for a man and his mind, she gives up her own mind as a sacrifice. And yet, in this new area, which used to be foreign to her nature, a second mind quickly grows back in its place, pushed into being by the man's mind.

**273.**

RISING AND SINKING IN MATTERS OF SEX.—The storm of desire will sometimes lift a man up to a height where all desire falls silent. There he truly loves, and he lives in a better state of being rather than just making better choices. On the other hand, a good woman, out of true love, often climbs down to desire and lowers herself in her own eyes. This second thing in particular is one of the most touching and moving feelings that the idea of a good marriage can bring with it.

**274.**

MAN PROMISES, WOMAN DELIVERS.—Through woman, Nature shows how far she has come so far in her life's mission of shaping

humanity. Through man, she shows what she has had to overcome, and what she still plans to do for humanity.—The most perfect woman of every age is like the Creator's holiday project on every seventh day of culture. She is the artist's rest and play after his work.

**275.**

MOVING THE PROBLEM.—Suppose we have used up our mind's strength to get control over our wild, unchecked passions. A sad result often follows: we move that wildness over into the mind itself. From then on, we go to extremes in our thinking and in our hunger for knowledge.

**276.**

LAUGHTER GIVES YOU AWAY.—How and when a woman laughs shows how cultured and well brought up she is. But the sound of her laughter reveals her true nature. In very cultured women, it may even reveal the last bit of their nature that nothing can ever dissolve or change. That is why the student of the human mind will say, like the Roman poet Horace, though for different reasons: "Laugh, girls!"

**277.**

FROM THE YOUNG SOUL.—Young people sometimes show deep devotion and sometimes rude disrespect toward the same person. This is because, deep down, they are really only looking down on themselves or admiring themselves in that other person. They just sway back and forth between these two feelings inside themselves, until experience has taught them how much they truly want and how much they are truly able to do.

**278.**

FOR MAKING THE WORLD BETTER.—If we did not allow the unhappy, the sulky, and the gloomy, bad-tempered people to have children, we might turn the world into a garden of happiness.—This short saying belongs to a practical philosophy meant for women.

**279.**

DON'T DOUBT YOUR FEELINGS.—Women often say, "Don't doubt your feelings." This means little more than "Eat whatever tastes good to you." For calm, moderate people especially, this may be a good everyday rule. But other kinds of people must live by a different rule: "You must eat not only with your mouth but also with your brain, so that your greedy mouth doesn't end up destroying you."

**280.**

A CRUEL IDEA THAT COMES WITH LOVE.—Every great love carries within it the cruel thought of killing the one who is loved, so that they will be taken away once and for all from the harmful game of change. For love is more afraid of change than of destruction.

**281.**

DOORS.—In everything a person learns or lives through, the child and the grown man both see doors. But for the child, the doors are places to go *to*. For the man, they are places to go *through*.

**282.**

SYMPATHETIC WOMEN.—Women's sympathy, which loves to talk, carries the sickbed out to the market for everyone to see.

**283.**

EARLY SUCCESS.—Someone who earns praise and success early in life tends to lose all respect for age and for old people. Because of this, and much to his own harm, he shuts himself out from the company of mature people, the very people who help others grow mature. So even with his early success, he stays inexperienced, pushy, and childish longer than other people do.

**284.**

SOULS MADE ALL IN ONE PIECE.—Women and artists believe that if we don't argue with them, it means we can't. To them, it seems impossible that someone could respect them on ten points and quietly disagree with them on ten others. This is because their souls are made all in one piece.

**285.**

YOUNG TALENTS.—When it comes to young, gifted people, we must strictly follow Goethe's rule: that we should often avoid hurting a mistake, so that we don't hurt the truth along with it. Their state is like the discomforts of pregnancy, and it brings strange cravings. These cravings should be satisfied and gone along with as much as possible, for the sake of the fruit we can expect them to produce. It is true that anyone who looks after these unusual patients must learn the hard skill of willingly putting themselves second.

**286.**

SICKENED BY TRUTH.—Women are made in such a way that every truth (about men, love, children, society, or the purpose of life) disgusts them—and they try to get revenge on anyone who opens their eyes.

**287.**

WHERE GREAT LOVE COMES FROM.—Where does a man's sudden passion for a woman come from, a passion so deep and so full of life? It comes least of all from physical desire alone. But when a man finds weakness, a need for help, and high spirits all joined together in the same person, his soul feels a kind of overflowing. He is moved and hurt at the very same moment. This is the point where great love springs up.

**288.**

CLEANLINESS.—In a child, the sense for cleanliness should be stirred up until it becomes a passion, the way you fan a small flame. Then later in life, step by step and in ever new stages, he will lift himself up to almost every good quality. In the end, to make up for any lack of talent, he will appear like a shining cloud of purity, self-control, gentleness, and strong character, happy in himself and spreading happiness all around him.

**289.**

ABOUT VAIN OLD MEN.—Deep thinking belongs to youth, and clear thinking belongs to old age. Yet sometimes old men still speak and write as if they were deep thinkers. When they do, it is out of vanity. They imagine that this way they take on the charm of youth: its excitement, its growth, its nervous worries, and its hopes.

**290.**

ENJOYING SOMETHING NEW.—Men later use a new lesson or experience as a plough to work the ground, or maybe also as a weapon. Women right away turn it into a piece of jewelry.

**291.**

HOW MEN AND WOMEN BEHAVE WHEN THEY ARE RIGHT.—If a woman is told she is right, she cannot stop herself from enjoying the triumph of putting her foot on the neck of the one she has beaten. She has to taste her victory to the very last drop. A man, on the other hand, when dealing with another man in the same situation, feels ashamed of being right. But then, men are used to winning; for women, it is the exception.

**292.**

GIVING UP SOMETHING IN ORDER TO BE BEAUTIFUL.—To become beautiful, a woman must not want to be thought pretty. In other words, in ninety-nine out of a hundred cases where she could win someone's liking, she must reject and set aside every thought of pleasing. Only then can she ever win the delight of the man whose soul has a door wide enough to let in greatness.

**293.**

IMPOSSIBLE TO UNDERSTAND, IMPOSSIBLE TO BEAR.—A young person cannot understand that an old man also once had his joys, his first dawning feelings, and his changing and soaring thoughts. It offends him to think that such things existed before him. But it makes him very bitter to hear that, in order to bear fruit, he must lose those flower buds and give up their sweet smell.

**294.**

THE PARTY THAT LOOKS LIKE A MARTYR.—Every political party that can make itself look like a suffering martyr wins kind-hearted people over to its side. Because of that, the party itself starts to look kind-hearted too—which is a big advantage for it.

**295.**

STATEMENTS WORK BETTER THAN ARGUMENTS.—For most people, at least, a bold statement has more effect than an argument, because arguments make people suspicious. That is why rabble-rousing politicians try to back up their party's arguments with bold statements.

**296.**

THE BEST AT HIDING THINGS.—All people who are successful again and again are deeply clever at making their faults and weaknesses look like signs of strength. This proves that they must know their own flaws unusually well.

**297.**

NOW AND THEN.—A man sat in the city gateway. He told someone who was passing through that this was the city gate. The passer-by answered that this was true, but that you shouldn't be too right if you expect people to thank you for it. "Oh," the first man replied, "I don't want thanks. But now and then it is very nice not just to be right, but to stay right."

**298.**

THE GERMANS DID NOT INVENT GOODNESS.—Think of Goethe's noble spirit and his freedom from jealousy. Think of Beethoven's fine, quiet acceptance of a lonely life, like a hermit's. Think of Mozart's cheerfulness and his kind, graceful heart. Think of Handel's firm, unbending strength and the freedom he found while still keeping to the rules. Think of Bach's confident, shining inner life, a life so sure of itself that it does not even need to give up fame and success. Are these qualities something only Germans have? If they are not,

then at least they show what goal Germans should aim for, and how far they can actually go.

**299.**

A HOLY LIE, OR SOMETHING ELSE?—I hope I am wrong, but I think that in Germany today everyone is expected to put on a double kind of fake show, as if it were the duty of the moment. Because of worries about the empire and politics, people are told to be German through and through. Because of fears about social unrest, people are told to be Christian. But both of these are wanted only in words and gestures, and especially in knowing when to keep quiet. It is the thin outer coat of paint that costs so much these days and is so highly rewarded. And so, to impress the people watching, the face of the nation puts on German and Christian wrinkles.

**300.**

HOW, EVEN IN GOOD THINGS, HALF CAN BE WORTH MORE THAN THE WHOLE.—Whenever something is built to last and needs many people working on it, a lot of things that are less than the best have to become the rule. This is true even though the person organizing it knows perfectly well what would be better, and also harder. He figures that there will always be enough people who are able to meet the rule, and he knows that the rule has to be what is only fairly good. A young person rarely understands this. As someone who wants to change things, he thinks how wonderfully right he is, and how strangely blind everyone else is.

**301.**

THE PARTY MAN.—A true loyal party member stops learning anything new. He only goes through things and passes judgment on

them. It means something that Solon, who never belonged to any party, but worked toward his goals above and apart from the parties, or even against them, was the one who came up with that simple saying. That saying holds the secret of why Athens was so healthy and full of life: "I am getting old, but I am always learning."

**302.**

WHAT IS GERMAN, ACCORDING TO GOETHE.—Some people are truly unbearable, because you cannot even take the good things they offer. They have a free and easy nature, but they do not notice that their taste and their minds are not free at all. And yet, according to Goethe's carefully thought-out opinion, this is exactly what is German. His words and his own example show that a German has to be more than just a German if he wants to be useful, or even bearable, to other nations. They also show which way his efforts should go, so that he can rise above and beyond himself.

**303.**

WHEN YOU SHOULD STAY WHERE YOU ARE.—When crowds start to go wild and clear thinking is hidden as if behind a cloud, it is a good idea, if your own mind and soul are not completely steady, to step into a doorway and look out to see what the weather is doing. In other words, take shelter and wait to see how the storm develops.

**304.**

THE SPIRIT OF REVOLUTION AND THE SPIRIT OF OWNING THINGS.—There is only one remedy against Socialism that you still have the power to use: do not provoke Socialism. In other words, live simply and be satisfied. Avoid showing off your wealth as much as you can. And help the government as much as you can when it taxes

everything that is extra and every luxury. You don't like this remedy? Then, you rich middle-class people who call yourselves "Liberals," admit the truth. The very urge that you find so frightening and threatening in Socialists is the same urge you allow to rule inside yourselves, as if it couldn't be helped, as if in your case it were something different. The way you are made, if you didn't have your fortune and the worry of holding on to it, this same urge would turn you into Socialists. Owning things is the only thing that makes you different from them. If you want to defeat the people who attack your wealth, you must first defeat yourselves. And if your wealth only meant living well, it would not be so much about outward show, and it would not make people so jealous. It would be more generous, kinder, more willing to make up for things, more helpful. But there is something fake and theatrical in your pleasures. You enjoy them more because others don't have them and feel jealous, than because they truly give you a sense of greater power. Look at your houses, your clothes, your carriages, your shops, the demands of your taste buds and your dinner tables, your loud excitement about opera and music. And last of all, look at your women: shaped and polished, but made of cheap metal, covered in gold paint but without the true ring of gold, chosen by you to be shown off, and believing themselves that they exist to be shown off. These are the things that spread the poison of this national sickness. More and more, it grabs hold of the masses as a Socialist itch of the heart. But it began with you, and it breeds among you. Who will stop this epidemic now?

**305.**

PARTY TACTICS.—Sometimes a party notices that one of its members, who used to support it completely, now supports it only with some conditions. The party can hardly stand this. So it annoys and humiliates him in every way it can, in order to force him to break

away completely and become an enemy. The party suspects that someone who wants to find only a limited value in its beliefs, a value that can be argued for and against, weighed up, and partly thrown out, is more dangerous than an open enemy.

**306.**

HOW TO MAKE A PARTY STRONGER.—If you want to make a party stronger on the inside, give it the chance to be treated with force and with obvious unfairness. That way the party gains a store of good conscience, a feeling of being in the right, which it may not have had before.

**307.**

TAKING CARE OF YOUR PAST.—In the end, people only respect what has been around a long time and has grown slowly. So anyone who wants to live on after his death must not only take care of the future but, even more, take care of the past. That is why tyrants of every kind, including bossy, power-hungry artists and politicians, like to twist history by force. They want history to look like a preparation for them, and like a ladder leading up to them.

**308.**

PARTY WRITERS.—Young writers who serve a party love the beating of drums. But to someone who does not belong to that party, the drumming sounds like the rattling of chains. It makes him feel sorry for them rather than admire them.

**309.**

TAKING SIDES AGAINST OURSELVES.—Our followers never forgive us when we take sides against our own earlier views. In their

eyes, we seem not only to be rejecting their love, but also to be making them look as if they weren't smart enough to see the truth.

**310.**

THE DANGER IN WEALTH.—Only a person with a real mind should own property. Otherwise, property is a danger to everyone else. Here is why. The owner does not know how to use the free time his belongings could give him, so he just keeps trying to get more property. This struggle becomes his job. It is his plan of attack in his war against boredom. So in the end, a modest amount of property, which would have been plenty for a thoughtful person, grows into real wealth. Such wealth, then, is like a shiny rock poking up out of the ground, and underneath it lies a mind that is dependent and poor. But it looks very different from what its humble beginnings would make you expect, because it can hide behind culture and art. In fact, it can buy that mask. Because of this, it stirs up envy in poor and uneducated people. Deep down, these people always envy culture, and they cannot see that the mask is only a mask. Little by little, this envy prepares the way for a social revolution. Coarse behavior covered in gold, and loud, showy bragging about enjoying culture, which is really only pretended, put this thought into the minds of the poor: "It's only a matter of money." And yes, it is partly a matter of money, but it is far more a matter of mind.

**311.**

THE JOY IN GIVING ORDERS AND TAKING ORDERS.—Giving orders is a joy, and so is obeying them. Giving orders is a joy as long as it has not yet become a habit. Obeying is a joy exactly when it has become a habit. So old servants working for new masters help each other to enjoy themselves: the servants enjoy their familiar habit of obeying, and the masters enjoy the freshness of giving orders.

**312.**

THE AMBITION TO LEAD A HOPELESS ATTACK.—There is a kind of ambition that wants to be part of the most hopeless, dangerous charge. This ambition pushes a group to put itself in the place of greatest danger.

**313.**

WHEN DONKEYS ARE NEEDED.—We will not get the crowd to shout "Hosanna!" and cheer for us until we have ridden into the city on a donkey. In other words, people only hail you as a hero when you come to them humbly, or even foolishly, in a way they recognize.

**314.**

HOW POLITICAL PARTIES BEHAVE.—Every party tries to make the important things that have grown up outside of it look unimportant. And if that does not work, it attacks those things, and the better they are, the more bitterly it attacks them.

**315.**

BECOMING EMPTY.—A person who gives himself up to the flow of events keeps losing more of himself, until less and less of him is left. That is why great politicians can end up as completely empty people, even though they were once full of ideas and rich inside.

**316.**

ENEMIES WHO ARE WELCOME.—These days, governments ruled by royal families are finding the Socialist movements more and more pleasant rather than frightening. That is because these movements give them a right and a weapon to pass special emergency laws. With

those laws, they can go after the things they are truly afraid of: democrats, and people who are against royal rule.—Toward everything these governments claim to hate, they secretly feel warmth and liking. But they are forced to keep their true feelings hidden behind a curtain.

**317.**

WHAT YOU OWN ENDS UP OWNING YOU.—Owning things makes people feel freer and more independent, but only up to a certain point. Go one step further, and the things you own become your master, and you become their slave. The owner has to give up his time and his thoughts to his property. He feels forced into dealings with other people, nailed down to one place, and tied into the State. And all this may go completely against what he truly and deeply needs.

**318.**

ON LETTING THE EXPERTS RULE.—It is easy, laughably easy, to design a model for choosing the people who make the laws. First, the honest and trustworthy people of the nation, who are also masters and experts in some field, need to rise to the top by sniffing each other out and recognizing each other. Then, from this group, a smaller selection must be made: the leading scholars and experts of the very highest rank in each field. These too are chosen by recognizing and vouching for one another. If the lawmaking body is made up of such people, then in the end, for each separate question, only the voices and opinions of the people with the most specialized knowledge should decide. All the others would have become so honest that it would simply be a matter of good manners to leave the voting to those experts as well. The result would be that the law, in the strictest sense, would come from the minds of the smartest people.—But as things are now, voting is done by parties. Every time a vote is taken,

there must be hundreds of uneasy consciences among the poorly educated, among those who cannot judge for themselves, among those who just repeat, copy, and go along with the crowd. Nothing makes a new law less respectable than this built-in, embarrassed feeling of dishonesty that always comes with every party vote. But, as I said, it is easy, laughably easy, to design such a model. No power on earth is strong enough right now to make this ideal come true. That will only happen if people finally come to believe that knowledge, and the people who have it, are the most useful things of all, and if even the most hostile minds begin to see this and prefer it to today's common belief in majorities. With such a future in mind, let our motto be: "More respect for the experts, and down with all parties!"

**319.**

ON THE "NATION OF THINKERS" (OR OF BAD THINKING).—People say the German character has certain qualities: it is vague, wavering, full of hunches, basic, and instinctive—to use unclear names for unclear things. If these qualities really still existed, they would prove that German culture has fallen several steps behind and is still wrapped in the magic spell and mood of the Middle Ages.—It is true that being behind like this has some advantages. Because of these qualities, the Germans (if, as I said, they still have them) would be able to do certain things, and especially to understand certain things, that other nations have now lost the ability to do. No doubt a lot is lost if this lack of clear sense is lost, since that is exactly what all those qualities have in common. But here too, no loss comes without the greatest gains to make up for it. So there is no reason to complain, as long as we do not act like children and greedy eaters who want to enjoy the fruits of every season of the year all at once.

## 320.

Carrying Coals to Newcastle (Doing What Is Already Done).—The governments of the big nations have two tools for keeping the people dependent, afraid and obedient. One is rougher: the army. The other is more subtle: the school. With the army, they win over the ambition of the upper classes and the strength of the lower classes, as far as both belong to active, energetic men of average or below-average talent. With the school, they win over the poor who are gifted, and especially the half-poor middle classes, who like to think of themselves as clever. Above all, they turn teachers of every level into a kind of court of the mind, a court that, without realizing it, is always looking "up toward the top." The government puts one obstacle after another in the way of private schools and of private tutoring, which it greatly dislikes. In this way it gains control over a large number of teaching jobs. Many hungry, obedient eyes are fixed on these jobs, five times more than could ever be given a job. But these jobs must pay the person who holds them only a little, so that he stays feverishly eager for promotion and ties himself even more tightly to the government's views. For it always pays better to keep people a little unhappy than to keep them content. Contentment is the mother of courage, and the grandmother of free thought and high spirits. Through this body of teachers, held on a tight rein in body and mind, the young people of the country are raised, as far as possible, to a certain level of education that is useful to the State, arranged on a fitting scale from lower to higher. Above all, the young and ambitious minds of every class are filled, almost without noticing it, with the idea that only a career approved and officially stamped by the State can lead straight to a high place in society. This belief in government exams and titles goes so deep that even men who have stayed independent and have risen through business or a trade still feel a sting of discontent in their hearts. They feel it until their position, too, is marked and recognized

from above by a kind gift of rank and medals, until they become a "somebody." Finally, the State links all of these hundreds of offices and jobs in its power to one rule: if you ever want to enter this magic circle, you must be trained and stamped in these State schools. Respect in society, a daily living, the chance to have a family, protection from those above, the feeling of belonging to a shared culture: all this forms a net of hopes that every young man walks into. How could he feel even the faintest breath of distrust? In the end, perhaps, after a few generations, the duty of serving as a soldier for one year has become for everyone a thoughtless habit, something taken for granted, something we keep in mind when we plan our lives from an early age. Then the State can risk its masterstroke: weaving together school and army, talent, ambition and strength through shared rewards. That is, it draws the most gifted people into the army on good terms and fills them with the military spirit of cheerful obedience. So in the end, perhaps, they stay devoted to the flag for good, and through their talents give it an ever new and brighter shine. Then nothing more is needed except a chance for great wars. These chances are supplied by diplomats, simply as part of their job, and so in all innocence, with help from newspapers and stock exchanges. For "the nation," being a nation of soldiers, never needs to be given a good conscience about war. It already has one.

**321.**

The Press.—Think about how, even today, all great political deals slip onto the stage secretly and quietly. They are hidden behind unimportant events, and they look small when they are close to us. They only show how far their effects reach long after they have happened, when the ground is still shaking from them. With that in mind, what importance can we give to the press as it is now, spending its breath every day to shout, to deafen, to stir people up, and to scare them? Is

it anything more than a never-ending false alarm, which tries to turn our ears and our minds in the wrong direction?

**322.**

After a Great Event.—When a great event has brought the soul of a nation or of a person out into the open, that nation or person usually feels an immediate need to do something childish or crude. They do it partly out of shame, and partly to rest and relax.

**323.**

TO BE A GOOD GERMAN MEANS TO STOP BEING SO GERMAN. —The differences between nations come, much more than people have noticed so far, simply from the different levels of culture they have reached. Only a very small part of these differences lasts for good, and even that part does not last for good in a strict sense. That is why arguments based on "national character" carry so little weight for someone who wants to change people's beliefs—in other words, for someone who works for culture. Take everything that has ever counted as German. Instead of asking the theoretical question, "What is German?", we would do better to ask, "What is German now?" And every good German will answer that question in practice, by growing beyond his own German traits. Because when a nation moves forward and grows, it bursts the belt that its national way of seeing things had tied around it. When a nation stands still or goes downhill, a new belt is tied around its soul. Then the outer shell gets harder and harder, until it builds a prison around the nation, with walls that keep growing higher. So if a nation has a great many things that are fixed and settled, that is a sign it wants to turn to stone and would like to become nothing but a monument. This is what happened to Egypt, from a certain point in time onward. So anyone who wishes the Germans well may think about how he himself can grow more and more

out of what is German. That is why the urge to be un-German has always been a mark of the most capable people in our nation.

**324.**

FOREIGN OPINIONS.—A foreigner traveled through Germany, and some of the things he said made people like him or dislike him, depending on which region he was staying in. He used to say that all clever Swabians are flirts.—The other Swabians, he said, still believed that Uhland was a real poet and that Goethe was immoral.—The best thing about the German novels that were popular at the moment, he said, was that you didn't need to read them, because you already knew what was in them.—The man from Berlin seemed more good-natured to him than the South German. The Berliner loved making fun of others far too much, and so he could take being made fun of himself, while the South German could not.—He said the Germans' minds were held down by their beer and their newspapers. He suggested they try tea and pamphlets instead—as a medicine, of course.—He told us to look at the different nations of tired old Europe and see how well each one showed off some particular quality of old age, to the delight of those watching this great show. The French, he said, play the cleverness and charm of old age very well; the English play its experience and its self-control; the Italians play its innocence and its openness. Could the other masks of old age be missing? Where, he asked, is the proud old man, the bossy old man, the greedy old man? —The most dangerous part of Germany, in his view, was Saxony and Thuringia. Nowhere else, he said, was there more quickness of mind and more understanding of people, together with freedom of thought. But all this was so modestly hidden behind the ugly local accent and the eager, fussy helpfulness of the people that you hardly noticed you were dealing with Germany's drill sergeants of the mind—her teachers, for better or for worse.—He said the arrogance of the North Ger-

mans was kept in check by their habit of obeying, and the arrogance of the South Germans by their habit of—making themselves comfortable.—It seemed to him that German men had, in their wives, clumsy but stubborn housewives, who praised themselves so constantly that they had almost convinced the world, and certainly their husbands, that they had a special German housewifely virtue.—Whenever the talk turned to Germany's policy at home and abroad, he would say (he called this "giving away the secret") that Germany's greatest statesman did not believe in great statesmen.—He saw the future of Germany as both threatened and threatening. The Germans, he said, had forgotten how to enjoy themselves—an art the Italians understood so well. Instead, through those great gambling games called wars and royal revolutions, they had gotten used to strong excitement, and so one day they would have a riot in the streets. Because a riot is the strongest excitement a nation can get for itself.—He said the German Socialist was all the more dangerous because he was not driven by any clear need. His problem was that he did not know what he wanted. So even if he got many of the things he was after, he would still waste away with longing in the middle of all his pleasures—just like Faust, but probably like a very crude Faust. "Because the Faust-Devil," he finally cried out, "who tormented educated Germans so much, was driven out by Bismarck. But now the Devil has gone into the pigs, and he is worse than ever!"

**325.**

OPINIONS.—Most people are nothing and count for nothing until they have dressed themselves up in beliefs everyone shares and in public opinions. This fits the tailors' saying: "Clothes make the man." But about unusual people we must say: "The one who wears the clothes is what makes them what they are." With such people, opin-

ions stop being public. They become something other than masks, decoration, and disguise.

**326.**

TWO KINDS OF LEVEL-HEADEDNESS.—There is a calm, sober state of mind that comes from being mentally worn out, and another that comes from self-control. To avoid mixing them up, notice this: the first kind is grumpy, and the second kind is cheerful.

**327.**

HOW JOY GETS SPOILED.—Call a thing good not one day longer than it seems good to us—and above all, not one day sooner. That is the only way to keep joy pure. Otherwise joy too easily turns bland and rotten in the mouth, and for whole layers of society it ends up among the fake, watered-down foods.

**328.**

THE SCAPEGOAT OF VIRTUE.—When a man does his very best, the people who wish him well but can't truly see his worth quickly look for a scapegoat to sacrifice. They think it is the scapegoat for sin—but it is really the scapegoat for virtue.

**329.**

BEING YOUR OWN MASTER.—To respect and admit to liking even something bad, when it pleases you, and to have no idea how anyone could feel ashamed of being pleased by it—that is the mark of being truly your own master, in big things and small ones.

**330.**

INFLUENCE IS A GHOST, NOT A REAL THING.—The important man slowly learns that, as far as he has any influence, he exists only as a ghostly image inside other people's heads. And perhaps he then falls into a quiet, nagging unease of the soul, in which he asks himself whether he ought to keep up this ghostly image of himself for the good of other people.

**331.**

GIVING AND TAKING.—When you take away even the smallest thing someone owns (or grab it before they can), that person becomes blind to the fact that you have given them something greater—no, even the greatest thing of all.

**332.**

GOOD FARMLAND.—Every time we reject something or say no to it, it shows that we are not fertile enough. If we were good farmland, we would let nothing go unused or wasted. In every thing, every event, and every person, we would welcome what we get—whether it is manure, rain, or sunshine.

**333.**

COMPANY AS A TREAT.—If a man turns away from the world and chooses to live alone on purpose, he may come to see time spent with other people, which he enjoys only rarely, as a special treat.

**334.**

KNOWING HOW TO SUFFER IN PUBLIC.—We should let people know about our troubles. Every now and then we should sigh out

loud and show clear signs that we're losing patience. Because if we let others see how confident and happy we are, even with pain and hardship, they would become so jealous and bad-tempered at the sight of it!—But we must be careful not to make our neighbors worse people. Besides, if they knew the truth, they would make us pay a heavy price for it. In any case, the troubles we show in public work to our private advantage.

**335.**

WARMTH ON THE MOUNTAINTOPS.—Up on the high places it is warmer than the people down in the valleys think, especially in winter. A thinker understands everything this comparison means.

**336.**

TO WANT THE GOOD AND BE ABLE TO DO THE BEAUTIFUL.—It is not enough to do good. We must also have truly wanted it, and, as the poet says, take God into what we want. But the beautiful is different. We must not try to want it. We must simply be able to do it, innocently and blindly, without poking around in our own minds. Whoever lights a lantern to go searching for perfect people should remember the sign that tells you who they are. They are the people who always act for the sake of the good, and by doing so they always reach the beautiful without ever thinking about the beautiful. Many people who are better and nobler, because they lack the power or lack beauty in their souls, stay dull and unpleasant to look at, in spite of all their good intentions and good deeds. They push people away from goodness and even hurt it, because their bad taste dresses goodness up in such ugly clothes.

**337.**

THE DANGER OF GIVING THINGS UP.—We must be careful not to build our lives on too small a base of wants and pleasures. Because if we give up all the joys that come with having a position, honors, friends and company, parties, physical comforts, and the arts, a day may come when we realize that all this rejecting has not made us wise. It has only made us sick and tired of life.

**338.**

A LAST OPINION ABOUT OPINIONS.—We should either hide our opinions or hide ourselves behind our opinions. Anyone who does something else doesn't understand how the world works, or else belongs to the club of holy hotheads.

**339.**

"SO LET US BE JOYFUL."—Joy must have powers in it that build up and heal the moral side of human beings. If not, how can we explain this? As soon as our soul soaks in the sunshine of joy, it quietly promises itself, without even noticing, "I will be good!" "I will become perfect!" And right away it is gripped by a feeling that perfection is coming, a feeling like a shiver of holy wonder.

**340.**

TO SOMEONE WHO IS BEING PRAISED.—As long as people are praising you, you can believe that you are not yet on your own path. You are still on someone else's.

**341.**

LOVING THE MASTER.—The student and the master both love the master, but in different ways.

**342.**

ALL TOO BEAUTIFUL AND HUMAN.—"Nature is too beautiful for you, poor human being," we often feel. But now and then, when I have thought deeply about everything human, in all its richness, strength, tenderness, and complexity, I have felt that I had to say, very humbly, "Human beings, too, are too beautiful for human beings to look at!" And I didn't mean only the good, moral person, but everyone.

**343.**

PROPERTY THAT CAN'T BE TAKEN.—Sometimes life treats us like a real robber. It takes away everything it can: honor, joys, friendships, health, and every kind of possession. Then, maybe, once the first shock is over, we find in the end that we are richer than before. Because now, for the first time, we know what belongs to us so deeply that no robber's hand can touch it. And maybe, after all the looting and destruction, we step forward looking like the owner of a great estate.

**344.**

MADE INTO AN IDEAL WITHOUT MEANING TO BE.—The most painful feeling there is, is finding out that people always take us for something higher than we really are. Because then we have to admit to ourselves: "There is something fake in you—in the way you speak, your face, the way you carry yourself, your eyes, the way you deal with people. This misleading part of you is just as necessary as your usual

honesty, but it keeps ruining what your honesty does and what it's worth."

**345.**

IDEALIST AND LIAR.—We must not let ourselves be bossed around, not even by our finest gift, the ability to see things as better and more ideal than they are. Otherwise one day truth will walk away from us with an insult: "You master liar, what do I have to do with you?"

**346.**

BEING MISUNDERSTOOD.—When people misunderstand you in general, you can't clear up any one particular misunderstanding. You have to see this clearly, so you don't waste energy defending yourself for nothing.

**347.**

THE WATER-DRINKER SPEAKS.—Go on drinking your wine, which has refreshed you your whole life. What business is it of yours if I have to drink water? Aren't wine and water peaceful, brotherly things that can live side by side without blaming each other?

**348.**

FROM THE LAND OF CANNIBALS.—When he is alone, the lonely man is eaten up by himself. In a crowd, he is eaten up by the many. Pick the one you like better.

**349.**

THE FREEZING POINT OF THE WILL.—"Someday the hour will finally come, the hour that wraps you in a golden cloud where nothing hurts. Then the soul enjoys its own tiredness. Happy to play patiently

with patience, it will be like the waves of a lake on a quiet summer day, reflecting a colorful evening sky. The waves sip and sip at the shore and then go quiet again—without end, without purpose, without getting full, without needing anything—all calm delight in change, all the rise and fall of Nature's heartbeat." This is how all sick people feel and talk. But if they actually reach that hour, a short time of enjoyment is followed by boredom. Yet this boredom is the warm wind that thaws the frozen will. The will wakes up, starts moving, and once again gives birth to one desire after another.—Desire is a sign of getting well, of recovery.

**350.**

THE IDEAL GIVEN UP.—Sometimes, as a rare exception, a person only reaches the very highest point when he gives up his ideal. That's because before, this ideal pushed him forward too hard, so that halfway along the track he kept running out of breath and had to stop and rest.

**351.**

A TRAITOROUS LEANING.—Here is a sign of a person who is jealous but also ambitious: he finds himself drawn to the idea that, when it comes to truly great people, there is only one way to be saved—love.

**352.**

TOO-LATE HAPPINESS.—Many people's cleverness can't keep up with the moment. The chance has already gone out through the door while their clever reply is still waiting outside on the stairs. In the same way, other people have a kind of too-late happiness that walks too slowly to keep up with fast-running Time. The best it can get out

of an experience, or out of a whole stretch of life, only reaches it long afterward. Often it comes just as a faint, spicy scent, which brings longing and sadness—as if it "might have been possible," at some point, to drink your fill of this thing. But now it is too late.

**353.**

WORMS.—A mind that has a few worms in it can still be fully ripe, just as fruit can.

**354.**

THE WINNER'S SEAT.—A man who sits well on his horse takes the courage away from his opponent and wins over the hearts of the people watching. Why would anyone attack such a man? So sit like someone who has already won!

**355.**

THE DANGER IN ADMIRING TOO MUCH.—If you admire the good qualities of other people too much, you can lose sight of your own good qualities. In the end, because you stop using them, you can lose those qualities altogether. And you don't even get to keep the other people's good qualities to make up for it.

**356.**

HOW BEING SICKLY CAN HELP.—Someone who is often ill gets much more pleasure out of being healthy, because he so often gets to recover. He also develops a very sharp sense for what is healthy and what is sick in the things people do and make, both in his own work and in other people's. For example, it is exactly the writers with shaky health—and sadly, almost all great writers belong in this group—who usually have a much steadier and more confident healthy tone in their

writing. That is because they know more than physically strong people do about how the mind stays healthy and goes through getting well. They also know its teachers better: the morning, the sunshine, the forest, and the spring of fresh water.

**357.**

BEING DISLOYAL IS PART OF BECOMING A MASTER.—There is no way around it. Every master has only one true student, and that student turns away from him, because he too is meant to become a master.

**358.**

NEVER FOR NOTHING.—When you climb the mountains of truth, the climb is never wasted. Either you reach a higher point today, or you build up your strength so that you can climb higher tomorrow.

**359.**

THROUGH GREY WINDOWS.—Is the view you get through your one window onto the world really so beautiful that you don't want to look through any other window? And do you even try to stop other people from looking through other windows?

**360.**

A SIGN OF DEEP CHANGE.—When we dream about people we forgot long ago, or people who have died, it is a sign that we have gone through deep changes. It means the ground we live on has been completely dug out from under us. The dead come back to life, and our distant past becomes our present.

**361.**

MEDICINE FOR THE SOUL.—Lying still and thinking very little is the cheapest medicine for every sickness of the soul. And if you are willing to go along with it, it becomes more pleasant with every hour you use it.

**362.**

WHO RANKS HIGHER IN THE MIND.—You rank far below other people when you are busy trying to prove the exception, while they are busy proving the rule.

**363.**

THE BELIEVER IN FATE.—You have to believe in fate—science can force you to. But whatever grows in you out of that belief—whether it is cowardice, devotion or nobility, or honesty—tells us about the soil the seed was planted in, not about the seed itself. Because from that one seed, anything at all can grow.

**364.**

WHY SO MANY PEOPLE ARE GRUMPY.—Someone who prefers what is beautiful to what is useful in life is like a child who prefers candy to bread. He will surely ruin his digestion and end up with a very grumpy view of the world.

**365.**

TOO MUCH AS A CURE.—We can learn to like our own talent again by spending some time honoring and enjoying the opposite talent far too much.—Using too much of something as a cure is one of the cleverer tricks in the art of living.

**366.**

"CHOOSE TO BE A SELF."—Active, successful people do not live by the saying "Know yourself." Instead, they act as if they are always facing the command: "Choose to be a self, and you will become a self."—It seems as if fate has always left them a choice. Quiet, thoughtful people, on the other hand, look back and think about how they chose their self "once and for all" when they first came into life.

**367.**

TRY TO LIVE WITHOUT FOLLOWERS AS MUCH AS YOU CAN.—We only understand how little followers really matter once we have stopped following our own followers.

**368.**

HIDING ONESELF.—We have to know how to make ourselves hard to see, so that we can get rid of the annoying admirers who buzz around us like swarms of gnats.

**369.**

BOREDOM.—There is a kind of boredom that hits the finest and most educated minds, for whom even the best things the world has to offer have gone stale. They are used to eating fancier and fancier food, and plain food disgusts them, so they are in danger of starving. That is because the very best things only exist in small amounts. Sometimes they have even become out of reach, or as hard as stone, so that even good teeth can't bite into them anymore.

**370.**

THE DANGER IN ADMIRING.—We can admire a quality or a skill so strongly that it scares us away from even trying to have that quality or skill ourselves.

**371.**

WHAT PEOPLE WANT FROM ART.—One person wants art so he can enjoy himself. Another wants art so that, for a while, he can get away from himself or rise above himself.—To meet both of these needs, there are two different kinds of artists.

**372.**

BREAKING AWAY.—When someone breaks away from us, maybe he doesn't offend us, but he certainly offends our supporters.

**373.**

AFTER DEATH.—Only long after a man has died do we find it hard to imagine life without him. With truly great men, this takes decades. When someone dies, honest people usually think he isn't missed very much, and that the grand speech at his funeral is just pretending. Only real need teaches us how much a person was needed. The right words for his gravestone are a sigh that comes too late.

**374.**

LEAVING THINGS IN THE UNDERWORLD.—We have to leave many things in the dark underworld of our half-aware feelings. We should not try to drag them out of their shadowy life there. Otherwise, once they turn into thoughts and words, they will become like demon tyrants ruling over us, cruelly thirsting for our blood.

**375.**

CLOSE TO BEGGING.—Even the richest mind sometimes loses the key to the room where it keeps its stored-up treasures. Then it is like the poorest of the poor, who have to beg just to stay alive.

**376.**

THINKERS IN CHAINS.—For someone who has done a great deal of thinking, every new thought he hears or reads immediately links up with others, like a chain.

**377.**

PITY.—Sometimes, inside the golden case of pity, the dagger of envy is hidden.

**378.**

WHAT IS GENIUS?—Aiming at a high goal, and also wanting the means to reach that goal.

**379.**

THE VANITY OF FIGHTERS.—A person who has no hope of winning a fight, or who is clearly losing, wants all the more for people to admire the way he fights.

**380.**

THE THINKER'S LIFE MISUNDERSTOOD.—Right at the moment when someone starts taking philosophy seriously, the whole world imagines he is doing the opposite.

**381.**

COPYING.—When things get copied, the bad gains a better name and the good loses its good name—especially in art.

**382.**

The Last Lesson of History.—"Oh, if only I had lived back in those days!" That is what foolish, shallow people cry out. But if we take a serious look at any period of history, even the most praised age of the past, by the end we will cry out instead: "Anything but going back to that! The spirit of that age would crush you like the weight of a hundred skies pressing down on you. You would not enjoy what was good and beautiful in it, and you could not stomach what was bad in it." You can be sure that people in the future will say the same about our own time. They will say it was unbearable, and that life in such conditions was impossible to stand. "And yet everyone manages to put up with his own time?" Yes, because the spirit of his age does not only press down *on* him; it is also *inside* him. The spirit of the age pushes back against itself, and so it can carry its own weight.

**383.**

Greatness as a Mask.—When we act in a grand, lofty way, we make our enemies bitter. But when we show our envy openly, we almost win them over. That is because envy brings people down to the same level and makes them equal. It is a kind of modesty, one that complains and does not know it is modest.—It may even happen, now and then, that people who are not envious at all pretend to be envious, wearing envy like a mask, just to get this advantage. But it is certainly true that ambitious people often use grand, lofty behavior as a mask to hide their envy. They would rather suffer the downsides and make

their enemies bitter than let anyone see that they think of those enemies as their equals.

**384.**

Unforgivable.—You gave him a chance to show how great his character was, and he did not take that chance. He will never forgive you for it.

**385.**

Opposites.—The oldest, most worn-out idea anyone ever had about people is in the famous saying, "The self is always hateful." The most childish idea is in the even more famous saying, "Love your neighbor as yourself."—With the first, understanding of people has come to an end. With the second, it has not even started yet.

**386.**

A Missing Ear.—"We still belong to the mob as long as we always push the blame onto other people. We are on the road to wisdom when we always hold only ourselves responsible. But the wise man finds no one to blame, neither himself nor anyone else."—Who said that? Epictetus, eighteen hundred years ago.—The world heard this saying, but then forgot it.—No, the world did not hear it, and so it did not forget it either. Not everything gets forgotten. We simply did not have the right ear for it, the ear of Epictetus.—So he whispered it into his own ear?—Exactly. Wisdom is the wise man whispering to himself in the middle of a crowded marketplace.

**387.**

A Problem with Where We Stand, Not with Our Eyes.—We always stand a few steps too close to ourselves and a few steps too far from

our neighbor. So we judge him too much as a whole, in one big lump. And we judge ourselves too much by small, separate, now-and-then, unimportant details and situations.

**388.**

Not Knowing About the Weapons.—How little we care whether someone else knows about a subject or not! Yet he may be sweating blood at the mere thought that people might think he is ignorant about it. Yes, there are some first-class fools who always walk around with a quiver full of powerful words of condemnation, like arrows. They are ready to shoot down anyone who openly shows that there are matters where their opinion does not count.

**389.**

At the Drinking Table of Experience.—Some people are naturally moderate, so they only ever drink half of each glass. Those people will not admit that everything in the world has dregs and muck at the bottom.

**390.**

Songbirds.—The followers of a great man often blind themselves, so that they can sing his praises better.

**391.**

Beyond What We Can Understand.—Something good usually annoys us when it is beyond what we can understand.

**392.**

Rule as Mother or as Child.—There is one situation that gives birth to rules, and another situation that rules give birth to.

**393.**

Comedy.—Sometimes we are given honor or love for things we did and achieved long ago, things we have left behind the way a snake sheds its skin. This easily tempts us into becoming comic actors playing our own past. We throw the old skin back over our shoulders once more. And we do that not only out of vanity, but also out of kindness toward the people who admire us.

**394.**

A Mistake That Biographers Make.—The small push needed to launch a boat into a river must not be mixed up with the power of the river that then carries the boat along. Yet nearly every biography makes this mistake.

**395.**

Not Paying Too Much.—When we pay too much for things, we usually end up using them badly. That is because we do not love them; we only have a painful memory of what they cost. So they bring us two kinds of trouble.

**396.**

The Philosophy Society Always Needs.—The pillars holding up society rest on one basic fact. Everyone looks happily at everything he is, does, and tries to do—at his sickness or health, his poverty or wealth, his honor or unimportance—and says to himself, "After all, I wouldn't trade places with anyone!"—Anyone who wants to add a stone to the building of society should always try to plant in people this cheerful way of thinking: being content, and not wanting to trade places.

**397.**

The Sign of a Noble Soul.—A noble soul is not one that can fly the highest. It is one that rises only a little and falls only a little, and always lives up in free, bright air, at a steady height.

**398.**

Greatness and the One Who Looks at It.—The finest effect of greatness is that it gives the person looking at it a way of seeing that makes things larger and more beautiful.

**399.**

Being Satisfied.—We show that our understanding has grown up when we no longer go searching for rare flowers hidden under the thorniest hedges of knowledge. Instead we are happy with gardens, forests, meadows, and plowed fields, because we remember that life is too short for what is rare and unusual.

**400.**

The Advantage of Going Without.—Someone who always lives in warmth and in a full heart—living, so to speak, in the summer air of the soul—cannot imagine the thrilling, almost frightening delight that comes over people with more wintry natures. Those people, just this once, are kissed by the rays of love and by the gentler breath of a sunny day in February.

**401.**

A Remedy for the Sufferer.—You find the weight of life too heavy? Then you must make the weight of your life even heavier. When the

sufferer finally longs for and looks for the river of Lethe, the river of forgetting, he must become a *hero* to be sure of finding it.

**402.**

The Judge.—Whoever has seen another person's ideal becomes that person's merciless judge, and, in a way, his guilty conscience.

**403.**

The Usefulness of Giving Up Something Big.—The useful thing about giving up something big is that it fills us with a young kind of pride. Because of that pride, we can easily ask ourselves to give up small things from then on.

**404.**

How Duty Gets Its Shine.—You can turn a duty made of plain brass into gold in everyone's eyes by always doing a little more than you promised.

**405.**

A Prayer to Humanity.—"Forgive us our virtues"—that is how we should pray to humanity.

**406.**

THOSE WHO CREATE AND THOSE WHO ENJOY.—Everyone who enjoys things thinks that the most important part of a tree is its fruit. But in fact, the most important part of a tree is its seed.—That is the difference between those who create and those who enjoy.

## 407.

THE GLORY OF ALL GREAT MEN.—What good is genius if it does not give the person who looks at it and admires it such freedom and such a high, noble feeling that he no longer needs genius at all?—Making themselves no longer needed is the glory of all great men.

## 408.

THE JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF THE DEAD.—I too have been down in the underworld, just like Odysseus in the old Greek story, and I will often go there again. To be able to talk with a few dead souls, I did not only sacrifice sheep, as he did. I did not even hold back my own blood. Four pairs answered me when I made my sacrifice: Epicurus and Montaigne, Goethe and Spinoza, Plato and Rousseau, Pascal and Schopenhauer. These are the ones I have to settle things with. When I have wandered alone for a long time, I will let them tell me whether I am right or wrong. And I will listen to them when they tell each other whether they are right or wrong. In everything I say, everything I decide, everything I work out for myself and for others, I keep my eyes fixed on those eight, and I see their eyes fixed on mine.—I hope the living will forgive me if I sometimes see them as ghosts, so pale and irritable, so restless, and, sadly, so hungry for life. Those eight, on the other hand, seem so alive to me that I feel as if, even now, after their death, they could never grow tired of life. But what really matters is a strength of life that lasts forever. What does “eternal life” matter, or even life itself?

## Part II. The Wanderer and His Shadow

The Shadow says: It has been such a long time since I heard you speak that I would like to give you a chance to talk.

The Wanderer says: I hear a voice. Where is it coming from? Whose is it? I almost thought I was hearing myself speak, only with a voice even weaker than my own.

The Shadow, after a pause, says: Aren't you glad to have a chance to speak?

The Wanderer says: By God, and by everything else I don't believe in, it is my shadow that is talking. I can hear it, but I don't believe it.

The Shadow says: Let's just accept that it's real and stop worrying about it. In another hour it will all be over.

The Wanderer says: That is exactly what I thought when, in a forest near Pisa, I saw first two camels and then five.

The Shadow says: So much the better if we are both equally patient with each other, now that, for once, our reason has gone quiet. That way we won't lose our tempers while we talk. And if some word happens to sound like nonsense to one of us, we won't immediately start torturing each other over it, as if with thumb-screws. If you don't know exactly how to answer, it's enough to say something. Those are the fair rules I follow when I talk with anyone. In a long conversation, even the wisest person turns into a fool once and into a simpleton three times.

The Wanderer says: Your modest expectations are not very flattering to the people you admit them to.

The Shadow says: So, am I supposed to flatter?

The Wanderer says: I thought a person's shadow was his vanity. Surely vanity would never ask, "So, am I supposed to flatter?"

The Shadow says: And human vanity, as far as I know it, also doesn't ask permission to speak, the way I have now done twice. It just speaks.

The Wanderer says: Now I see, for the first time, how rude I have been to you, my dear shadow. I haven't said a single word about how deeply delighted I am to hear you, and not just to see you. You should know that I love shadows just as much as I love light. For a face to be beautiful, for speech to be clear, for a character to be kind and firm, shadow is just as necessary as light. The two are not enemies. Instead, they hold each other's hands like good friends. And when the light disappears, the shadow slips away after it.

The Shadow says: Yes, and I hate the same thing that you hate: night. I love people because they are devoted to life. I am happy when I see their eyes shine as they understand and discover things, because they never get tired of understanding and discovering. When the sunlight of knowledge falls on anything, it casts a shadow. That shadow is me, too.

The Wanderer says: I think I understand you, even though you put it in rather shadowy, unclear words. You are right. Now and then, good friends say a mysterious phrase to each other as a sign that they understand one another, and to anyone else it is meant to be a riddle. And we are good friends, you and I. So, enough of the introductions! A few hundred questions are weighing on my soul, and the time you have to answer them may be short. Let's see how we can come to an agreement as quickly and as peacefully as possible.

The Shadow says: But shadows are shyer than people. You won't tell anyone how we talked together, will you?

The Wanderer says: How we talked together? Heaven save me from long, drawn-out dialogues written up as literature! If Plato had enjoyed stretching his dialogues out a little less, his readers would have enjoyed Plato a little more. A conversation that is a pleasure in real life becomes, once it is written down and read, like a picture where all the distances and proportions are wrong. Everything is either too long or too short. Still, maybe I could tell people the points we came to agree on?

The Shadow says: I'm happy with that. Everyone will just think they are seeing your opinions once again, and nobody will think about the shadow.

The Wanderer says: Maybe you're wrong, my friend! Up to now, people have seen more of the shadow in my opinions than of me.

The Shadow says: More of the shadow than of the light? Can that be possible?

The Wanderer says: Be serious, you dear fool! My very first question calls for seriousness.

**1.**

ABOUT THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE.—It gives us what is likely, but not truth. It gives us what looks like freedom, but not real freedom. These are its two fruits, and because of them nobody can mix up the tree of knowledge with the tree of life.

**2.**

THE WORLD'S REASON.—Is the world, at its core, made of some never-ending, perfect reason? No, it is not. Proof enough is that the one small piece of the world we actually know, our own human reason, is not very reasonable. And if this piece is not always and completely wise and reasonable, then the rest of the world will not be either. Here the rule of reasoning "from the smaller to the greater, from the part to the whole" works, and it settles the question for good.

**3.**

"IN THE BEGINNING WAS."—To praise where things started is a kind of new shoot growing back from old ideas about the beyond. It sprouts up again when we look at history, and it really does make us believe that everything most valuable and most important is found at the very beginning of things.

**4.**

HOW TO MEASURE THE VALUE OF TRUTH.—How hard a mountain is to climb tells you nothing about how high it is. "But with science it's different!" say certain people who want to be seen as "insiders." They claim that how hard a truth is to find decides how valuable that truth is! This crazy way of thinking comes from the idea that

"truths" are really just pieces of gym equipment, things we have to work out on until we are completely worn out. It is a set of rules made for athletes and gymnasts of the mind.

### 5.

HOW WE TALK VERSUS HOW THINGS REALLY ARE.—People put on a fake contempt for the things that matter most to them in real life, meaning all the everyday things. For example, we say, "We only eat to live." That is a horrible lie, just like the lie that says having children is the true purpose of all sexual pleasure. On the other hand, the respect people show for "the most important things" is almost never fully real. It is true that priests and thinkers about the beyond have trained us to talk about these lofty things in a fake, overblown way. But they have not changed the feeling deep down that these "most important things" are not as important as those looked-down-on "everyday things." This double fakeness has a terrible result. We never make these everyday things, like eating, housing, clothes, and how we deal with other people, the subject of steady, open-minded thought and improvement that covers every part of them. Instead, because thinking about them seems beneath us, we turn our serious minds and our creative talents away from them. So in these matters, habit and carelessness easily win out over people who do not think, especially over young people who lack experience. Meanwhile, because we keep breaking the simplest rules of how the body and mind work, all of us, young and old, end up in a shameful state of dependence, almost like servants. I mean our dependence on doctors, teachers, and priests, a dependence that we really do not need, and which still weighs heavily on all of society.

## 6.

OUR EARTHLY WEAKNESSES AND THEIR MAIN CAUSE.—If we look around us, we keep meeting people who have eaten eggs all their lives without noticing that the long, oval ones taste best. They do not know that a thunderstorm is good for the stomach. They do not know that perfumes smell strongest in cold, clear air, or that our sense of taste is different in different parts of the mouth, or that every meal where we talk well or listen well is bad for digestion. Even if these examples of poor noticing do not convince us, we will all the more easily agree that most people see everyday things very badly and hardly ever pay attention to them. Does this matter?—Let us remember that almost all the bodily and mental weaknesses a person has come from this very failing. People do not know what is good and bad for them in how they set up their way of life, how they divide up their day, which friends they choose and how much time they give them, in work and in free time, in giving orders and following them, in how they feel about nature and art, in how they eat, sleep, and think. This not knowing, this lack of sharp noticing in the smallest and most ordinary details, is what turns the world into "a valley of tears" for so many people. Let us not say that, here as everywhere else, the problem is that humans lack reason. There is plenty of reason, more than enough. But it is pointed in the wrong direction, and it has been deliberately steered away from these small, personal things. Priests and teachers, and the high-minded ambition of all idealists, both the crude ones and the clever ones, drum it into the ears of even small children that serving humanity as a whole depends on completely different things. They say it depends on saving your soul, serving the State, moving science forward, or even on having a high rank and owning property. Meanwhile, they treat what each person needs, all his big and small needs throughout the twenty-four hours of the day, as petty or unimportant.—Even Socrates fought with all his strength

against this proud neglect of the individual human being for the sake of humanity in general. He liked to quote a line from Homer to show where all our worry and thought truly belong: "All that really matters," he said, "is the good and bad that happens to me at home."

**7.**

TWO WAYS TO COMFORT PEOPLE.—Epicurus was the great comforter of troubled souls in the later ancient world. He had an amazing insight, one that is still very rare even today. He said that to calm the mind, you do not need to solve the deepest and most final questions of theory. So he did not start a pointless, far-off debate about the final question of whether the gods existed. Instead, to people who were tortured by "fear of the gods," he simply said: "If there are gods, they do not care about us." This position is much stronger and works much better. By giving the other person a few points, you make him more willing to listen and to take your words to heart. But as soon as he starts trying to prove the opposite (that the gods do care about us), the poor man falls into thorny jungles of mistakes. He does this all by himself, without the person he is talking to playing any tricks on him! That other person only needs to be clever enough and kind enough to hide the fact that he feels sorry for this sad spectacle. In the end, the man starts to feel disgust with his own idea. And disgust is the strongest argument there is against any claim. He grows cold toward the idea and walks away in the same mood as a complete atheist who says, "What do the gods matter to me? To the devil with them!"—In other cases, especially when some idea that was half about the body and half about morals had darkened a person's mind, Epicurus did not try to disprove that idea. He agreed that it might be true. But he added that there was *a second idea* that could explain the same thing, and that maybe it could be supported in other ways too. Having several possible explanations (for example, about where our feelings of

guilt come from) is enough, even in our own time, to clear away the dark clouds from the soul. Those clouds come so easily when we keep brooding over one single explanation, the only one we can see, and so we give it a hundred times more weight than it deserves.—So anyone who wants to comfort the unlucky, the criminal, the person who worries endlessly about his health, or the dying, can remember these two calming ideas of Epicurus. They can be used for a great many problems. Put in their simplest form, they go like this: first, even if the thing is true, it does not concern us; second, the thing may be true, but it may also be different.

## 8.

IN THE NIGHT.—As soon as night starts to fall, the way we feel about everyday things changes. There is the wind, sneaking around as if on forbidden paths, whispering as if it were looking for something, and getting upset because it cannot find it. There is the lamplight, with its dim red glow and its tired look. It fights against the night without wanting to, like a sulky slave serving the man who stays awake. There is the breathing of someone asleep, with its frightening rhythm. It is as if some worry that keeps coming back were playing a trumpet tune along with it. We cannot hear that tune, but when the sleeper's chest rises, we feel our heart tighten. And when the breath sinks and almost fades away into a deathly silence, we say to ourselves, "Rest a while, poor troubled soul!" Every living creature carries such a heavy load that we wish them rest forever. Night seems to invite us toward death.—If people had no sun, and fought off the night only with moonlight and oil lamps, what a dark philosophy would cover them like a veil! Even now we can see all too clearly how a shadow falls over the mind and spirit of humans because of the half of life that is wrapped in darkness and without sun.

## 9.

WHERE THE IDEA OF FREE WILL COMES FROM.—Necessity rules over people in different forms. It rules one man through his passions. It rules another through his habit of listening and obeying. It rules a third through a conscience that demands logic. It rules a fourth through his whims and his naughty pleasure in dodging things. But these four people all look for the freedom of their will exactly where they are most tightly chained. It is as if a silkworm thought it showed free will by spinning silk. Why is this? Clearly because everyone thinks he is most free where his life energy is strongest. So, as I said, one finds it in passion, another in duty, another in knowledge, another in whims. Without realizing it, a person imagines that wherever he is strong, wherever he feels most fully alive, that is where his freedom must be. He thinks that being dependent goes with being dull and listless, and being independent goes with being lively, as if these always came in pairs.—So something people have experienced in society and politics gets wrongly carried over into the deepest questions about the nature of reality. In society, the strong man really is also the free man. There, the vivid feelings of joy and sorrow, the high hopes, the sharp desires, and the powerful hatreds belong to ruling, independent people. Meanwhile, the servant and the slave live in a dazed, crushed state.—The idea of free will was invented by the ruling classes.

## 10.

NOT FEELING NEW CHAINS.—As long as we do not feel that we depend on something, we think we are independent. This is a false conclusion, and it shows how proud humans are and how hungry for power. For in thinking this way, a person assumes he would always notice and recognize dependence the moment he was under it. Behind this lies another assumption: that he usually lives in independence,

and that if he ever lost it for once, he would right away feel the difference.—But suppose the opposite is true. Suppose he is always living in a complicated web of dependence, but thinks he is free wherever he has grown so used to the chain that he no longer feels its weight. He only suffers from new chains. And "free will" really means nothing more than not feeling any new chains.

## 11.

FREE WILL AND CUTTING FACTS OFF FROM EACH OTHER.—When we look at things in our usual careless way, we take a bunch of events, treat them as one thing, and call that a "fact." Then we imagine an empty gap between this fact and the next one, so that each fact stands alone. But really, everything we do and everything we know is not a row of separate facts with empty spaces in between. It is one steady, flowing stream. Now, believing in free will does not fit with the idea of a steady, even, unbroken flow that can't be split up. That belief takes it for granted that every single action stands by itself and can't be broken down further. It is like an "atom theory" of wanting and knowing: it treats each choice and each thought as a tiny separate piece.—We get facts wrong in the same way we get people's characters wrong. We talk about "similar characters" and "similar facts," but neither really exists. On top of that, all our praise and blame rests on this false idea: that there are similar facts, and that facts come in kinds arranged in a ladder, matching a ladder of values. So we don't just cut off the single fact from everything else; we also cut off whole groups of facts that only look alike, such as good actions, evil actions, kind actions, jealous actions, and so on. In both cases we are wrong.—The most obvious reason we believe that groups of actions stand apart like this is because of words and ideas. When we use a word or an idea, we don't just put a label on things. In the back of our minds we think that the word or idea lets us grab hold

of what the action really is, deep down. Words and actions still keep fooling us all the time. They make us think things are simpler than they are: separate, unbreakable, existing completely on their own. Language has a hidden set of philosophical myths built into it. No matter how careful we are, those myths keep bursting out again every moment. The belief in free will, which means believing in similar facts and separate facts, has in language a preacher and defender that never stops speaking up for it.

**12.**

THE BASIC MISTAKES.—A person can't feel any pleasure or pain of the mind unless he is under the spell of one of two false beliefs. The first is that he believes certain facts or feelings are the same as others. Then he gets pleasure or pain in his mind by comparing how things are now with how they were before, and noticing how alike or how different they are. This always happens when we remember things. The second is that he believes in the freedom of the will. Maybe he thinks, "I shouldn't have done that," or "This could have turned out differently," and from these thoughts too he gets pleasure and pain. Without these mistakes, which run all through every mental pain and pleasure, humanity would never have developed at all. That's because the central idea of being human is this: that man is free in a world where everything else is tied down. Man, the endless miracle-worker, whether his deeds are good or evil. Man, the astonishing exception, the beast above all beasts, the almost-God, the mind of all creation, the one thing that can't be done without, the answer to the riddle of the universe, the mighty master of nature who also looks down on nature, the creature that calls its own history "the history of the world"! In Latin: "Man is the emptiest of empty things."

**13.**

SAYING IT TWICE.—It is a great idea to say something in two different ways, one right after the other. That way you give it a right foot and a left foot. Truth can stand on one leg, it's true. But with two legs she can walk and finish her journey.

**14.**

MAN AS THE CLOWN OF THE WORLD.—It would take beings smarter than humans to fully enjoy how funny it is that man sees himself as the goal of everything that exists. It is just as funny that he seriously announces he can only be satisfied if he has some world-mission to carry out. If a God made the world, then he made man to be his monkey, something that copies him and keeps him entertained forever during his rather boring eternity. In that case, the "music of the spheres," the heavenly music said to surround the world, would probably be the mocking laughter of all the other creatures around mankind. God, bored, uses pain to tickle his favorite pet, so he can enjoy watching its proud, tragic poses and its looks of suffering. More generally, he enjoys the clever ideas thought up by the vainest of his creatures, being himself the inventor of this inventor. After all, whoever invented man as a joke must have had more brains, and more joy in using them, than man has.—Even here, where human nature is willing to make itself small, our vanity tricks us again. Even in this, we humans want to be at least wonderful and one of a kind. Our uniqueness in the world! Oh, how unlikely that is! Astronomers, who sometimes get a view beyond our world, tell us something different. They tell us that the little drop of life on Earth means nothing to the huge ocean of things being born and dying. They tell us that countless stars have conditions for life to start, just like Earth. And yet these are only a handful compared with the endless number of stars that have never had life break out on them, or that got over it

long ago, as if recovering from a rash. They tell us that on each of these stars, life, compared with how long the star exists, has lasted only an instant, a flicker, followed by long, long stretches without it. So life is in no way the aim and final purpose of those stars. Maybe the ant in the forest is just as sure that it is the aim and purpose of the forest, as we are sure in our imagination, almost without noticing, that the end of mankind would mean the end of the world. It is even modest of us to stop there, and not to stage a great sunset of the whole world and all its gods as the funeral for the last human being. Even to the most fair-minded astronomer, a world without life can hardly look like anything other than a shining, swinging star with man buried inside it.

**15.**

HOW MODEST MAN IS.—It takes so little pleasure to make most people feel that life is good! How modest man is!

**16.**

WHERE NOT CARING IS NEEDED.—Nothing would be more wrong-headed than this: to wait for the truths that science will one day finally prove about the first and last things, and in the meantime to think (and above all to believe) in the old, traditional way, as people so often tell us to do. The urge that makes us look for nothing but *certainties* in this area is a branch growing out of religion, nothing better. It is a hidden kind of the "need for the beyond," one that only looks doubtful and skeptical on the surface. The idea behind it is that for a long time we will not be able to get any view of these final certainties, and that until then the "believer" has the right not to bother himself about the whole subject. But we do not need these certainties about the farthest edges of things in order to live a full and useful human life, any more than an ant needs them in order to be a good

ant. Instead, we should find out where that troublesome importance came from, the importance we have given to these things for so long. For this we need the history of moral and religious feelings, because it is only under the influence of such feelings that these sharpest problems of knowledge have become so heavy and so frightening. Into the farthest regions that the mind's eye can reach toward (without ever actually getting *inside* them), we have smuggled ideas like guilt and punishment (and everlasting punishment at that!). The darker those regions were, the more careless we have been. For ages people have let their imaginations run wild in places where they could prove nothing. And they have talked later generations into accepting these fantasies as serious and true, playing this disgusting lie as their final winning card: that faith is worth more than knowledge. What we need now about these final things is not knowledge set up against faith. What we need is not caring, set up against both faith and fake knowledge in these matters!—Everything ought to be closer to us than the things we have been preached to until now as the most important. I mean questions like: "What purpose does a human being serve?" "What happens to him after death?" "How does he make peace with God?" and all the rest of that bag of tricks. The problems of the philosophers who lay down fixed doctrines, whether they are idealists, materialists, or realists, matter to us as little as these religious questions do. They all have the same goal: to force us to make a decision in matters where we need neither faith nor knowledge. It is better, even for the most passionate lover of knowledge, that the land open to research and reason should be surrounded by a belt of foggy, dangerous marshland, a strip of country that is always soggy, that no one can get through, and that no one can map. It is exactly by comparing it with the kingdom of darkness at the edge of the world of knowledge that the bright, reachable part of that world becomes more valuable.—We must once again become good friends of "everyday things." We must stop doing what we have done until now:

looking down on them and looking past them at clouds and monsters of the night. In forests and caves, in swampy lands and under gray skies, on the lowest steps of the ladder of culture, human beings lived for ages and ages, and lived in poverty. There they learned to look down on the present, on their neighbors, on their lives, and on themselves. And we, who now live in the brighter fields of nature and of the mind, still carry in our blood some stain of this contempt for everyday things.

**17.**

DEEP INTERPRETATIONS.—If someone has explained a passage in a writer's work "more deeply" than the writer meant it, he has not explained the writer. He has made him harder to understand. Our thinkers about the beyond stand in the same position toward the "text" of Nature, or an even worse one. Because to make their deep interpretations work, they often change the text to fit their purpose. In other words, they spoil the text. A strange example of how a writer's text can be spoiled and clouded comes from Schopenhauer's ideas about pregnant women. "The sign of a lasting will to live through time," he says, "is sex. The sign of the light of knowledge, which is joined again to this will and holds the chance of being set free, and in the clearest possible way, is the new taking on of a body by the will to live. This new body is signaled by pregnancy, which is therefore frank and open, and even proud, while sex hides itself like a criminal." He claims that every woman, if she were caught in the act of sex, would probably die of shame, but "shows off her pregnancy without a trace of shame, and even with a kind of pride." Now, first of all, this condition can hardly be shown off more boldly than it shows itself. When Schopenhauer stresses only that the showing off is on purpose, he is shaping his text to fit his interpretation. Besides that, his claim that this happens with everyone is not true. He talks about

"every woman." But many women, especially younger ones, often seem painfully ashamed of their condition, even in front of their closest relatives. And when older women, especially from the poorer classes, really do seem proud of their condition, it is because they want us to understand that their husbands still desire them. When a neighbor who sees them, or a stranger passing by, says or thinks, "Can that really be?"—that is a little gift always welcome to the vanity of women who are not very bright. Turning it the other way, if we followed Schopenhauer's idea, the cleverest and most intelligent women should be the ones who most openly celebrate their condition. After all, they have the best chance of giving birth to a genius, in whom "the will" can once again "deny" itself for the good of everyone. Stupid women, on the other hand, would have every reason to hide their pregnancy more modestly than anything else they hide.—No one can say that this view matches reality. But suppose Schopenhauer was right in general that women show more self-satisfaction when pregnant than at any other time. Then a better explanation is right at hand. Picture a hen clucking even before she lays an egg, as if saying, "Look! Look! I'm going to lay an egg! I'm going to lay an egg!"

**18.**

THE MODERN DIOGENES.—Before we go looking for a real human being, we first have to find the lantern.—Will it have to be the lantern of the Cynic, the old Greek philosopher Diogenes, who searched with a lamp in daylight for an honest man?

**19.**

RULE-BREAKERS OF MORALS.—Students of human nature now have to put up with being called rule-breakers of morals, because they cut morals open to study them. But whoever wants to cut something open must kill it. He does this only so that we may know more, judge

better, and live better, not so that the whole world will go around cutting things open. Sadly, people still think that every student of human nature, in everything he does, must be a model for others to copy. They mix him up with the preacher of morals. The older students of human nature did not cut open and study enough, and they preached too often. That is where this confusion comes from, along with the unpleasant results it brings for the students of human nature of our own time.

**20.**

A WARNING NOT TO MIX THINGS UP.—There are students of human nature who look at certain fine qualities as hard scientific puzzles. One is the strong, noble, self-sacrificing attitude of people like the heroes in Plutarch's stories. Another is the pure, wise, warm-hearted state of mind that belongs to truly good men and women. These thinkers study where such things come from. They point out that what looks simple is really made of many parts. They turn their eyes to the tangled ball of motives, to the fine web of mistaken ideas, and to the feelings of single people or of whole groups. These feelings were passed down from ancient times and slowly grew bigger over the years. Such students of human nature are very different from the people they are most often confused with. Those others are small-minded people who do not believe in these ways of thinking and states of mind at all. They imagine that their own emptiness must be hiding somewhere behind the shine of greatness and purity, as if everyone were secretly as poor in spirit as they are. The students of human nature say, "Here are problems to solve." And these pitiful people say, "Here are fakes and lies." So the small-minded ones deny that the very things exist which the students of human nature are working so hard to explain.

## 21.

Man as the Measurer. Maybe all human morality began with the huge excitement that gripped early humans when they discovered measuring: measures, scales, and weighing. In German, the word for "man" is said to mean "the measurer." So man wanted to name himself after his greatest discovery! With these ideas, people climbed up into areas that are completely beyond any measuring and weighing. But at the start, those areas did not seem to be out of reach.

## 22.

The Principle of the Balance of Power. The robber, and the powerful man who promises to protect a community from robbers, are perhaps deep down made from the same mold. The only difference is that the powerful man gets what he wants in a different way from the robber. He gets it through regular taxes the community pays him, and no longer through money taken by force. The same link exists between the merchant and the pirate. For a long time they are one and the same person: when one job seems unwise to them, they do the other. Even today, the morals of trade are really nothing more than a polished version of the morals of pirates. You buy where things are cheapest, at cost price if you can, and you sell where things are most expensive. The key point is this: the powerful man promises to keep up the balance of power against the robber, and this gives the weak a chance to live. The weak have two choices. Either they band together until they are as strong as the threat, or they place themselves under someone who is that strong, which means they serve him in return for his efforts. People usually choose the second way, because it actually keeps two dangerous beings in check. The robber is held back by the powerful man. And the powerful man is held back by his own self-interest, because he gains by treating the people under him kindly and patiently, so that they can support not only themselves but also

their ruler. In fact, life may still be hard and cruel enough. But compared with being wiped out completely, which used to be a constant danger, people can breathe freely. A community starts out as the weak organizing themselves to balance out threatening forces. It would be even wiser to organize so as to outweigh those forces, if the members grew strong enough to destroy the enemy power. And when there is just one mighty oppressor, they will surely try. But if that one man is the head of a clan, or has many followers, a quick and final victory over him is unlikely. Then a long or endless feud is to be expected. Such a feud, though, is the worst situation for the community. It loses the time it needs to provide its food and living in a steady way, and it sees the fruits of all its work threatened every hour. So the community prefers to raise its power to attack and defend itself to exactly the same level as the power of its dangerous neighbor. Then it lets him know that an equal weight now sits on its own side of the scales. So why not be good friends? This shows that the balance of power is a very important idea for understanding the old teachings about law and morals. In fact, the balance of power is the foundation of justice. In rougher times, when justice says, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," it assumes this balance has been reached. It tries to keep the balance through this kind of payback, so that when a crime happens, the injured person will not take revenge out of blind rage. Through this law of equal payback, the balance of power that was upset is put back in place. In those early times, one more eye or one more arm meant a little more power, a little more weight. In a community where everyone sees themselves as equal, shame and punishment wait for crime, which means for breaking the rule of balance. Shame is thrown onto the scale as a counterweight against the person who has overstepped. He gained something by overstepping, and now, through shame, he suffers losses that cancel out and outweigh what he gained before. Punishment works the same way. It sets up a much heavier counterweight against the advantage every criminal hopes to

win: prison against an act of violence, paying back and fines against theft. In this way the wrongdoer is reminded that his action has cut him off from the community and from the moral benefits it gives. The community now treats him as lower, as a weaker brother, an outsider. That is why punishment is not just paying back. It has something more in it, something of the cruelty of life in the wild, before society, and it serves as a reminder of that.

**23.**

DO PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE IN FREE WILL HAVE THE RIGHT TO PUNISH?—People whose job is to judge and punish try to work out, in every case, whether a wrongdoer is truly responsible for what he did. They ask whether he was able to use his power to think, and whether he acted for reasons, rather than without knowing it or because he was forced. If he is punished, it is because he chose the worse reasons over the better ones, which means he must have known the better ones. Where this knowledge is missing, the common view says a person is not responsible. There is one exception: when his ignorance, for example his not knowing the law, comes from deliberately failing to learn what he should have learned. In that case, he already chose the worse reasons over the better ones back when he refused to learn, and now he must pay the price for that foolish choice. On the other hand, if he never saw the better reasons at all, maybe because he was stupid or could not see far ahead, he is usually not punished. People say that he made a wrong choice, that he acted like a dumb animal. So before we treat the wrongdoer as someone who deserves punishment, we now need him to have rejected the better reason on purpose. But how can anyone be, on purpose, less reasonable than he ought to be? If the scales hold good reasons on one side and bad reasons on the other, where does the decision come from? So, they say, the cause is not a mistake or blindness, and not

some force from inside or outside? (We should also remember that every so-called "force from outside" is really nothing more than a force from inside: the force of fear and pain.) Where does it come from, then? That question keeps coming back. So reason is not supposed to be the cause of the action, because reason cannot decide against the better reasons? And so we call on "free will" to help us. Pure free choice is supposed to decide. There is supposed to be a moment when no reason has any pull at all, when the deed happens like a miracle, coming out of nothing. And it is this imagined free choice that gets punished, in a case where free choice should not have been in charge at all. They say that reason, which knows the law, what is forbidden, and what is ordered, should have left no choice. It should have worked like a force, like a higher power. So the wrongdoer is punished because he used his "free will." In other words, he acted without a reason where he should have been guided by reasons. But why did he do it? That question is not even allowed. The deed was done without a "Why?", without a reason, without a source. It was something without purpose and without thought.—But by the very condition we started with for deciding who can be punished, such a deed should not be punished at all! And there is more. Another possible reason for punishing should not count here either: the idea that in this case something was not done, was left out, that reason was not used at all. Because in any case, leaving it out was not done on purpose, and only leaving something out on purpose is thought to deserve punishment. Yes, the wrongdoer chose the worse reasons over the better ones, but he did it without any reason or purpose. Yes, he failed to use his reason, but not with the goal of not using it. In cases of crimes that deserve punishment, we assume that the criminal gave up his reason on purpose. But the idea of "free will" takes away that very assumption. So by your own rules, you must not punish, you who believe in free will!—However, these rules are nothing but a truly amazing myth

made out of ideas. The hen that hatched them sat on her eggs very far away from anything real.

**24.**

JUDGING THE CRIMINAL AND HIS JUDGE.—The criminal knows the whole chain of events that led to his act. So he does not see his act as being so far outside the normal order of things, or so impossible to understand, as his judge does. Yet his punishment is measured by how shocked the judge is when he finds the crime impossible to understand.—Suppose the defense lawyer knows enough about the case and everything that led up to it. Then the so-called "reasons for going easier," which he properly brings forward, should end up freeing his client from all guilt. To put it more plainly: step by step, the lawyer will soften the judge's shock and finally make it disappear. He does this by forcing every honest listener to admit silently: "He had no choice but to act the way he did. If we punished him, we would be punishing eternal Necessity itself."—So we measure the punishment by how much we know, or can find out, about what led up to the crime. Doesn't that go against all fairness?

**25.**

TRADE AND FAIRNESS.—In a trade, the only fair and honest way would be for each side to ask only as much as he thinks his goods are worth. He could take into account the effort it took to get them, how rare they are, the time spent, and so on, along with what they mean to him personally. As soon as you set your price according to how badly the other person needs the thing, you become a polished kind of robber and blackmailer.—If money is the only thing used for trading, we must remember that a shilling is not at all the same thing in the hands of a rich heir, a farm worker, a shopkeeper, and a university student. It would be fair for each person to get a lot or a little for his

money, depending on whether he worked a lot or a little to earn it. In real life, as we all know, it is the other way around. In the world of big money, the lazy rich man's shilling can buy more than the shilling of the poor, hard-working man.

**26.**

LAWS AS TOOLS.—When law is based on agreements between equals, it stays valid only as long as the power of both sides stays equal or about the same. Wisdom created law to put an end to all the fighting and pointless waste between people who stand on equal ground. But this waste comes to an end just as surely when one side has become clearly weaker than the other. Then one side rules over the other, and law stops, but the outcome is the same as what law achieves. Because now it is the wisdom of the stronger side that tells it to spare the weaker side and not waste his strength for nothing. So the weaker one is often better off than an equal would be.—This means that legal arrangements are temporary tools that wisdom recommends. They are means to an end, not the end itself.

**27.**

WHY PEOPLE ENJOY OTHERS' BAD LUCK.—Enjoying someone else's bad luck happens when a person knows he is in a bad situation and feels worry, regret, or pain. Say a man called A sees misfortune hit a man called B. That misfortune makes B equal to A, so A makes his peace and stops being jealous.—If A is doing well, he still stores B's misfortune away in his memory, like money saved in the bank. He keeps it so he can throw it onto the scales to balance things out when hard times hit him. In this case too, he feels that "wicked joy" (in German, *Schadenfreude*). So the feeling of equality applies its measuring stick to the world of luck and chance. Enjoying others' bad luck is the most common way people express a win and the return of equality,

even in a more advanced society. This feeling has only existed since people learned to see another person as their equal. In other words, it has existed since society began.

## 28.

HOW RANDOM PUNISHMENT CAN BE.—For most criminals, punishment arrives the way an unplanned child arrives for a woman. They have done the same thing a hundred times, and nothing bad ever came of it. Then suddenly they are found out, and being found out brings punishment. And yet habit ought to make the crime look easier to forgive, because the criminal has built up an urge that is hard to fight. Instead, the opposite happens: the criminal is punished more harshly if people suspect he commits crimes out of habit, and habit is treated as a solid reason not to go easy on him. On the other hand, someone who has lived a model life, where the crime stands out in an even more shocking way against everything else, ought to look even more guilty! But here the custom is to make the punishment lighter. Everything is judged not from the criminal's point of view, but from society's point of view, by how much it has lost and how much danger it faces. The good a person has done in the past is weighed against his one wicked act. His earlier crimes are added to the one just discovered. And in this way the punishment is set as high as it can go. But if we punish or reward a man's past like this (because making the punishment lighter is a kind of reward), then we ought to go further back. We ought to punish and reward whatever caused his past, by which I mean his parents, his teachers, and society. In many cases we would then find that the *judges* themselves share in the guilt in one way or another. It is random and unfair to stop at the criminal himself when we are punishing his past. If we will not agree that every crime is completely excusable, then we should stop at each single case and dig no deeper into the past. In other words, we should treat the guilt

on its own and not link it to earlier actions. Otherwise we are breaking the rules of logic. The people who teach free will should follow their own teaching about "free will" to the end, and boldly declare: "No action has a past."

**29.**

ENVY AND HER NOBLER SISTER.—Wherever equality is truly accepted and firmly set up for good, we see a certain urge grow. People usually call it immoral, and it could hardly exist at all in a state of nature, before society. That urge is envy. The envious man notices every sign that someone stands above the ordinary crowd. He wants to push everyone back down to the same level, or else to lift himself up to the higher level. From this come two different ways of acting, which the Greek poet Hesiod called good and bad rivalry. In the same way, where people are equal, there is outrage when A. does better than he deserves and better than equality allows, and B. does worse than he deserves. These feelings, though, belong to nobler people. They feel that justice and fairness are missing in things that do not depend on what people choose. In other words, they want the equality that people agree on to be agreed on by Nature and chance as well. They are angry that people who deserve the same should not have the same luck.

**30.**

THE GODS' JEALOUSY.—"The gods' jealousy" comes about when a looked-down-on person puts himself on the same level as someone above him, like the Greek hero Ajax did. Or it comes about when good fortune makes him equal to that person, like Niobe, the mother who was blessed with too many children. In a society divided into classes, this jealousy demands that no one should have greater merits than his place in life allows. It demands that his success should match

his position. Above all, it demands that his sense of his own importance should not grow beyond the limits of his rank. The winning general, or the student who creates a masterpiece, has often felt "the gods' jealousy."

**31.**

VANITY AS SOMETHING THAT GROWS BACK AGAINST SOCIETY.—People made themselves equal to one another for the sake of safety, so that they could form communities. But this idea of equality was forced on them in a way, and it goes completely against what each person wants by instinct. So the more safety is guaranteed for everyone, the more new shoots of the old instinct to be on top start to sprout. These shoots show up when people set up differences between classes, when they demand special honors and privileges for their jobs, and, more generally, in vanity: in manners, clothes, the way they talk, and so on. As soon as the community is clearly in danger, the majority, who could not push their way to the top in a time of general peace, bring back equality once more. For the time being, those silly privileges and vanities vanish. But if the community falls apart completely and there is total lawlessness, then the state of nature returns. That means a totally merciless inequality, like the one the Greek historian Thucydides describes on the island of Corcyra. There is no such thing as natural justice, and no such thing as natural injustice either.

**32.**

FAIRNESS.—Fairness grows out of justice. It appears among people who do not clash with the equality of their community. It is a finer way of applying the principle of balance of power, and it is used in cases where the law says nothing. Fairness looks both forward and backward. Its rule is: "Treat others the way you would want them to

treat you." The Latin word *Aequum* means: "This principle fits with our equality. It smooths out even our small differences so that we look equal, and it expects us to be gentle in cases where we are not forced to forgive."

**33.**

WHAT REVENGE IS MADE OF.—The word "revenge" is said so quickly that it almost seems it could only have one root, one basic idea and feeling behind it. So people still keep trying to find that one root. In the same way, our economists have never gotten tired of sniffing out a single meaning behind the word "value," and of hunting for the original, basic idea of value. As if words were not all just pockets, with this thing or that thing, or several things at once, stuffed into them! So "revenge" means one thing at one time, another thing at another time, and sometimes it is a mix of things. First, let us pick out the defensive hit-back that we make almost without thinking, even against lifeless things that have hurt us, like a moving machine. The idea is to stop the thing that hurt us, by bringing the machine to a halt. Sometimes, to manage this, the hit-back has to be strong enough to smash the machine. If the machine is too strong for one man to break, he will still strike the hardest blow he can, as a kind of last try. We act the same way toward people who hurt us, in the very first moment we feel the hurt. If we want to call this revenge, fine. But we must remember that here only the urge to protect ourselves has set the gears of our reason turning. In the end, we are not thinking about the person who hurt us, only about ourselves. We act without any plan to hurt them back. We only want to get away safe and unharmed. —It takes time for our thoughts to move from ourselves to our enemy, and to ask where he can be hurt the most. That is what happens in the second kind of revenge. Its starting point is to think about where the other person is weak and sensitive. The goal then is to cause pain.

On the other hand, in this case the idea of protecting oneself from more harm is so far outside the avenger's view that he nearly always ends up bringing more harm on himself, and he often sees this coming quite calmly. In the first kind of revenge, it was fear of a second blow that made the hit-back as strong as possible. In this second kind, there is almost no concern at all about what the enemy will do next. How hard we strike back depends only on what he has *already* done to us. So what has he done? And what good is it to us that he suffers now, after we have suffered because of him? This is a case of evening the score, while the first kind of revenge only serves to protect ourselves. Perhaps because of our enemy we have lost property, position, friends, or children. Revenge does not get these losses back. Evening the score only deals with one extra loss that has been added on top of all the others. The evening-the-score kind of revenge does not protect us from more harm, and it does not repair the harm already done—except in one case. If our honour has been damaged by our enemy, revenge can give it back. And in any case our honour *has* been damaged if someone has harmed us on purpose, because by doing so the enemy showed that he was not afraid of us. With revenge we show that we are not afraid of him either, and that is where the settling, the evening of the score, lies. (Some people want so badly to show they are not afraid at all that, for them, the dangers of revenge—losing their health, their life, or other things—are a necessary part of any act of revenge. That is why they fight duels, even though the law also offers to help them get justice for what they have suffered. A safe way of getting their honour back does not satisfy them, because it would not prove that they are fearless.)—In the first kind of revenge, it is fear itself that strikes back. In the second kind, it is the lack of fear, which, as we said, wants to show itself in the hit-back.—So nothing seems more different than the motives behind the two kinds of action that go by the one word "revenge." Yet it often happens that the avenger is not really sure what made him do it. Maybe he struck

back out of fear and the instinct to protect himself. But later, when he has time to think about it from the point of view of hurt honour, he tells himself that he took revenge for the sake of his honour. That motive is, after all, more *respectable* than the other one. One key question is whether he sees his honour as damaged in the eyes of others (the world), or only in the eyes of the person who hurt him. In the second case he will prefer secret revenge; in the first, open revenge. And depending on how strongly or weakly he imagines what is going on inside the mind of the offender and of the onlookers, his revenge will be more bitter or more mild. If he has no imagination of this kind at all, he will not think of revenge, because he has no feeling of "honour," and so it cannot be hurt. In the same way, he will not think of revenge if he looks down on the offender and the onlookers. Since he looks down on them, they cannot give him honour, and so they cannot take honour away from him either. Finally, he will give up revenge in the fairly common case where he loves the offender. It is true that he then loses honour in the other person's eyes, and may become less deserving of being loved back. But even giving up all hope of being loved back is a sacrifice love is willing to make, when its only aim is not to hurt the one it loves. Hurting the loved one would mean hurting oneself more than the sacrifice does.—So everyone will take revenge, unless he has no sense of honour, or feels contempt or love for the offender. Even when he goes to the courts, he wants revenge as a private person. But also, as a thoughtful, sensible member of society, he wants society to take revenge on someone who does not respect it. So legal punishment restores both private honour and society's honour. In other words, punishment is revenge. Punishment certainly also contains the first kind of revenge we described, since through it society helps protect itself and strikes back in self-defence. Punishment wants to prevent more harm and to frighten other wrongdoers. In this way, the two parts of revenge, different as they are, come together in punishment. And this may be the main thing

that keeps the confusion we talked about alive, the confusion that means the person taking revenge usually does not know what he really wants.

**34.**

THE VIRTUES THAT HURT US.—As members of a community, we feel we have no right to practise certain virtues. As private people, these same virtues bring us great honour and some pleasure. One example is being lenient and kind towards wrongdoers of every kind. In short, this covers every way of acting where our goodness would cost society something. No group of judges, facing its own conscience, may allow itself to be merciful. That privilege is kept for the king as a single person, and we are glad when he uses it. This shows that we would like to be merciful as individuals, but not as a group. Society only recognises the virtues that are useful to it, or at least do it no harm. These are virtues like justice, which can be practised without any loss, or in fact bring back a profit with interest piled on interest. The virtues that hurt us cannot have started in society, because even today, every small society that is just forming pushes back against them. So these virtues must belong to people of unequal rank. They were invented by those who stood above others. They are the virtues of rulers, and the idea behind them is this: "I am strong enough to accept a clear loss, and that proves how powerful I am." So they are virtues very closely related to pride.

**35.**

WEIGHING UP WHAT IS IN OUR INTEREST.—There would be no tricky arguing over hard moral cases if there were not first tricky arguing over what is to our advantage. Even the freest and sharpest mind is often unable to choose between two options in a way that is sure to bring the greater benefit. In such cases we choose because we

have to, and afterwards we often feel a kind of seasickness of the feelings, a queasy, unsettled emotion.

**36.**

BECOMING A FAKER.—Every beggar becomes a faker, just like everyone who earns a living out of need, whether that need is their own or the public's.—The beggar does not feel his poverty nearly as sharply as he has to make others feel it, if he wants to live off begging.

**37.**

A KIND OF WORSHIP OF THE PASSIONS.—You worriers, you thinkers who crawl about blind like worms, you talk about how terrifying human passions are, so that you can rage against how dreadful the whole structure of the world is. As if the passions were always and everywhere terrifying! As if this kind of terror must always exist in the world!—Through carelessness in small things, and through not paying enough attention to yourselves and to the young people growing up, you yourselves let your passions grow into such wild monsters that now you are scared at the mere sound of the word "passion"! It is up to you, and it is up to us, to strip the passions of their frightening features. It is up to us to hold them back with dams, so that they do not turn into floods that destroy everything.—We must not raise our mistakes up into a doom that lasts forever. Instead, let us honestly try to turn all the passions of humanity into sources of joy.(18)

**38.**

THE STING OF CONSCIENCE.—The sting of conscience is like a dog chewing on a stone: it is simply foolish.

## 39.

WHERE RIGHTS COME FROM.—Rights can be traced back to traditions, and traditions can be traced back to agreements made for the moment. At some point, people were all happy with the results of an agreement they had made, and at the same time too lazy to renew it officially. So they went on living as if it had been renewed again and again. Little by little, as forgetting drew a veil over how it all began, they came to believe they had a holy, unchangeable foundation that every generation would be forced to build on. Tradition had now become a pressure on them, even when it no longer brought the benefit that the agreement first gave.—This is where the weak have always found their strong fortress. They tend to want to make the passing agreement last forever, along with every single kindness ever shown to them.

## 40.

HOW FORGETTING SHAPES OUR MORAL FEELINGS.—In early societies, certain actions were first done for the common good. Later on, the same actions were done for other reasons. Some did them out of fear or respect for the people who demanded and recommended them. Some did them out of habit, because they had seen them done around them since childhood. Some did them out of kindness, because doing them brought delight and approving looks from everyone. And some did them out of vanity, because they were praised for it. Actions like these, where the basic reason, usefulness, has been *forgotten*, are then called moral. This is not really because they are done for those other reasons, but because they are not done with a conscious aim of being useful.—So where does this sudden hatred of usefulness come from? Why do all praiseworthy actions make a point of shutting out every action done for the sake of usefulness?—Clearly, society is the gathering point of all morality and of all the sayings that praise

moral action. It has had to fight too long and too hard against the selfishness and stubbornness of the individual not to rank every other motive as morally higher than usefulness. That is why it looks as if morals did not grow out of usefulness. In fact, morals were at first simply what was useful to the public. It had great trouble winning out over the interests of each single person and gaining a nobler reputation.

## 41.

THE HEIRS TO MORAL WEALTH.—Even when it comes to morals, there is a kind of inherited wealth. It belongs to the gentle, the good-natured, the kind-hearted, and the forgiving. They have inherited their gentle way of acting from their ancestors, but not the common sense that was the source of that way of acting. The nice thing about this wealth is that you must always give away and share some of it if it is going to be noticed at all. In this way, without meaning to, this wealth tries to bridge the gap between the morally rich and the morally poor. And its best and most remarkable feature is that it does this not to bring rich and poor to some middle level in the future, but so that everyone can have plenty and more than enough.—That may be the common view of inherited moral wealth. But it seems to me that this view is held more "for the greater glory" of morality than out of respect for the truth. Experience, at least, teaches a rule that must act, if not as a disproof, then at least as an important limit on that broad claim. Experience says this: without the finest intelligence, without the sharpest ability to choose, and without a strong habit of keeping to the middle way, the morally rich will become wasteful spenders of morality. For by giving in without any restraint to their kind, gentle, peace-making, smoothing-over instincts, they make everyone around them more careless, more greedy, and more sentimental. The children

of these highly moral big spenders easily become, at best (sad to say), pleasant but useless wasters.

**42.**

THE JUDGE AND REASONS FOR GOING EASY.—An old soldier had just been told the story of Faust, the man who made a deal with the devil, in rather more detail. He said: "A person should act honourably even towards the devil and pay what he owes. Hell is the right place for Faust!" His wife cried out: "You men are terrible! How can that be? After all, his only fault was that he had no ink in his inkpot! Signing in blood is a sin, of course, but surely such a handsome man shouldn't burn in the fires of Hell just for that?"

**43.**

THE PROBLEM OF THE DUTY TO TELL THE TRUTH.—Duty is a bossy feeling that pushes us to act. We call it good, and we treat it as something nobody should argue about. We will not debate where duty comes from, how far it goes, or what justifies it, and we won't let anyone else debate it either. But the thinker sees everything as something that has developed over time, and he sees everything that has developed as open for discussion. So as long as he is only a thinker, he has no duty. As a thinker, he would not accept that there is a duty to see and speak the truth. He would not even *feel* that feeling. He asks: where does it come from, and where is it going? But even this questioning seems doubtful to him. And yet, wouldn't the result be that the thinker's machinery would stop working properly if he really felt free of all duty in his search for knowledge? So it seems that the machine needs, as its fuel, the very thing it is supposed to examine.—Maybe the rule will be this: suppose there were a duty to recognize the truth; then what is the truth about every other kind of duty?—But isn't a sense of duty that is only "supposed" a contradiction in itself?

## 44.

STEPS OF MORALITY.—Morality is, first of all, a way of keeping a community alive and saving it from falling apart. Next, it is a way of keeping the community at a certain level and with a certain amount of kindness. Its driving forces are fear and hope. And these take a cruder, rougher, and stronger form the more people still lean toward what is twisted, narrow, and selfish. The most terrible ways of frightening people have to be used as long as gentler ways don't work and this double kind of protection can't be achieved. (By the way, the strongest scare of all is the invention of an afterlife with a hell that lasts forever.) For this purpose we need racks and torturers of the soul. The next steps of morality, and so the next means to that goal, are the commands of a God (as in the law of Moses). Further and higher still are the commands of an absolute sense of duty that says "You shall". All of these are roughly carved but *wide* steps, because people cannot yet put their feet on the finer, narrower steps. After that comes a morality based on what we like, then on good taste, and finally on understanding. This last kind goes beyond all the false reasons for being moral, but it has convinced itself that for long stretches of time humanity could not have been given any other kind.

## 45.

THE MORALITY OF PITY WHEN PREACHED BY PEOPLE WITHOUT SELF-CONTROL.—Some people are not really masters of themselves. They don't understand morality as self-control and self-mastery, practiced over and over in big things and small ones. Without realizing it, such people end up praising the good, caring, kindly urges of a morality that runs on instinct. That kind of morality has no head; it seems to be made only of a heart and helping hands. It even suits them to throw doubt on a morality based on reason, and to set up the other kind as the only true morality.

## 46.

SEWERS OF THE SOUL.—Even the soul needs its own sewers, where it can let its dirt drain away. For this it may use other people, relatives, social classes, its home country, or the whole world. Or finally, for the completely arrogant (I mean our modern "gloomy outlook" people, the so-called pessimists), it uses *le bon Dieu*, "the good Lord" himself.

## 47.

A KIND OF REST AND STARING.—Be careful that your resting and thinking don't look like a dog in front of a butcher's shop. Fear stops it from going forward, greed stops it from going back, and it opens its eyes as wide as if they were mouths.

## 48.

BANS WITHOUT REASONS.—When something is forbidden and we don't understand or accept the reason, the ban becomes almost an order to do it. This is true not only for stubborn people but also for people who are hungry for knowledge. We right away try it out, to find out *why* it was forbidden. Moral bans, like those in the Ten Commandments, only fit times when reason has been beaten down. Today, a ban like "You shall not kill" or "You shall not cheat on your husband or wife," given without any reasons, would do more harm than good.

## 49.

A CHARACTER SKETCH.—What kind of man could say this about himself: "I look down on people very easily, but I never hate them. In every person I quickly find something worth respecting, and I respect him for it. The so-called likeable qualities don't attract me much"?

## 50.

PITY AND CONTEMPT.—Showing pity is seen as a sign of contempt. That's because once you become someone people pity, you have clearly stopped being someone they *fear*. You have sunk below the balance of power. And that balance doesn't satisfy human vanity anyway. Vanity is only satisfied by the feeling that you make others respect you and stand in awe of you. So it is hard to explain why pity is valued so highly, just as we need to explain why the unselfish man is praised, when at first he was looked down on or feared as being sly.

## 51.

BEING ABLE TO BE SMALL.—We have to be as close to flowers, grasses, and butterflies as a child is, which means not much bigger than they are. We grown-ups have grown up past them and have to bend down to them. I think the grasses hate us when we tell them we love them.—Whoever wants a share of all good things must know, at times, how to be small.

## 52.

WHAT CONSCIENCE ADDS UP TO.—Our conscience adds up to everything that was regularly demanded of us without reasons when we were children, by people we respected or feared. From conscience comes that feeling of having to ("I must do this, I must not do that"), which doesn't ask: Why must I?—Whenever something is done with "because" and "why," a person acts without conscience, but that doesn't mean he acts *against* conscience.—Belief in authority is where conscience comes from. So conscience is not the voice of God in a person's heart, but the voice of certain people inside a person.

**53.**

CONQUERING THE PASSIONS.—The man who has overcome his strong passions has taken over the richest soil, like a settler who has become master of swamps and forests. Planting the seeds of good deeds of the mind on the ground of those defeated passions is the next and most urgent job. The conquest itself is a means, not a goal. If it isn't seen that way, all kinds of weeds and devil's crops quickly sprout on the rich, cleared ground, and soon everything grows wilder and thicker than before.

**54.**

SKILL AT SERVING.—All so-called practical people are skilled at serving, whether they serve others or themselves. That is what makes them practical. Robinson had a servant even better than Friday: his name was Crusoe.

**55.**

HOW LANGUAGE THREATENS FREEDOM OF THE MIND.—Every word is a judgment made in advance.

**56.**

THE MIND AND BOREDOM.—There is a saying: "The Hungarian is far too lazy to get bored." That gives us something to think about. Only the highest and most active animals are able to feel bored.—God's boredom on the seventh day of Creation would make a fine subject for a great poet.

## 57.

HOW WE TREAT ANIMALS.—You can still see where our morality comes from by looking at how we treat animals. When there is nothing to gain or lose, we feel completely free of responsibility. For example, we kill insects, or hurt them, or let them live, and usually we never think about it again. We are so clumsy that even our kind gestures toward flowers and small animals nearly always end up killing them. But this does not spoil our pleasure in them one bit.—Today is the festival of the small animals, the hottest, stickiest day of the year. Things are swarming and crawling all around us. And we, without meaning to, but also without thinking, crush a little fly or a winged beetle here and there.—If animals harm us, we try to wipe them out in every way we can. The methods are often cruel enough, even when we do not really mean them to be. It is the cruelty of not thinking. If animals are useful, we use them for our own gain. Then a wiser kind of thinking teaches us that some animals pay us back richly if we treat them differently, by caring for them and breeding them. This is where responsibility first begins. People avoid torturing farm animals. One man gets angry if another man is cruel to his cow. This fits the old, simple morality of the community, which believes the whole group is in danger whenever one person does wrong. Anyone who sees a wrong done in the community is afraid it will harm him too, in a roundabout way. So when we see farm animals mistreated, we worry about the quality of meat, about farming, and about transport. Also, a person who is harsh to animals makes people suspect that he is harsh to weak people too, to those beneath him who cannot strike back. He is seen as low and lacking in the finer kind of pride. This is how a foundation for moral judgments and feelings is laid. But the biggest part is played by superstition. Many animals, through their looks, sounds and movements, tempt people to imagine themselves inside them. And some religions teach that, in certain

cases, animals are the homes of human or divine souls. So these religions advise a nobler kind of care, or even deep respect and awe, when dealing with animals. Even after this superstition has faded, the feelings it stirred up keep having their effect. They keep ripening and blooming.—Christianity, as everyone knows, has shown itself to be a poor and backward religion in this respect.

**58.**

NEW ACTORS.—Among human beings, nothing is more ordinary than death. Next comes birth, ranked second only because it is possible to die without being born. After that comes marriage. But these worn-out little plays, half sad and half funny, are always performed by new actors, every single time, in their countless performances. That is why they never run out of interested viewers. Otherwise we might well think the whole audience of the world's theatre would have hanged themselves from every tree long ago, out of pure boredom with these shows. So much depends on new actors, and so little on the play itself.

**59.**

WHAT DOES "BEING STUBBORN" MEAN?—The shortest way is not the straightest line possible. It is the way where good winds fill our sails. That is what sailors have learned. Not to follow that route is stubborn. In that case, strength of character has been spoiled by mixing it with stupidity.

**60.**

THE WORD "VANITY."—It is annoying that certain words, which we students of human nature simply cannot do without, carry a kind of moral disapproval built into them. This comes from times when the

most ordinary and natural urges were condemned. Here is an example. There is a basic belief that, on the waves of society, whether we sail safely or get shipwrecked depends far more on how we appear than on what we really are. This belief has to guide everything we do in dealing with society. Yet it is labeled with the general word "vanity." In other words, one of the most important and meaningful of human qualities is labeled with a word that makes it sound basically empty and worthless. A great thing is given a small name. It is even slandered, as if drawn in a mocking cartoon. There is nothing we can do about it. We have to use such words. But when we do, we must close our ears to what old habits whisper about them.

## 61.

THE FATALISM OF THE TURK.—The Turkish belief in fate has one basic flaw: it treats man and fate as two separate things. According to this belief, man may fight against fate and try to outwit it, but in the end fate always wins. So the most sensible thing is either to give in, or to live however one likes. But in truth, every person is himself a piece of fate. When he thinks he is fighting fate like this, fate is getting its way even through that fight. The fight is a fantasy. But so is giving in to fate. All these fantasies are part of fate.—Most people are afraid of the idea that denies free will. What they really fear is this Turkish belief in fate. They imagine that man will weakly give up and face the future with his hands folded, since he cannot change anything about it. Or they imagine he will let all his whims run wild, since what is already decided cannot be made worse that way. But a person's foolish acts are just as much a piece of fate as his wise ones. Even that fear of believing in fate is itself fated. You yourself, you poor timid creature, are that unbeatable Fate that rules even the gods. Whatever happens, you are a curse or a blessing. Either way, you are the chains that bind even the strongest. In you, the whole future of

the human world is already decided. There is no point in being frightened of yourself.

**62.**

THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE.—"Only through our own suffering do we become wise, and only through other people's suffering do we become good." So goes that strange philosophy which traces all morality back to pity and all intelligence back to the individual being cut off from others. In this, the philosophy is, without knowing it, arguing in favour of everything that makes humans worse. For pity needs suffering, and being cut off from others needs looking down on them.

**63.**

THE MORAL MASKS OF CHARACTER.—In times when the typical masks of each social class are firmly fixed, just like the classes themselves, students of human nature are tempted to treat the moral masks as fixed and absolute too, and to describe them that way. That is why Molière makes sense as someone living in the society of Louis XIV. In our society, which is full of changes and in-between stages, he would look like an inspired know-it-all stuck on rules.

**64.**

THE NOBLEST VIRTUE.—In the first age of higher humanity, courage is counted as the noblest virtue. In the next, it is justice. In the third, self-control. In the fourth, wisdom. In which age do we live? In which do you live?

**65.**

A NECESSARY FIRST STEP.—Imagine a man who refuses to get control of his bad temper, his poisonous and revengeful feelings, and his

desires, but still tries to become the master of something else. He is as foolish as a farmer who plants his field right next to a rushing river and does nothing to protect it from that river.

**66.**

WHAT IS TRUTH?—Schwarzert (that is, Melanchthon) says: We often preach our faith most loudly after we have lost it, and we try every possible way to find it again—and at those times our preaching is often not the worst!

Luther answers: Brother, today you are truly talking like an angel.

Schwarzert replies: But that is what your enemies think, and they say it about you.

Luther answers: Then it would be a lie straight out of the devil's backside.

**67.**

THE HABIT OF SEEING OPPOSITES.—When we look at nature in a shallow, careless way, we see opposites everywhere, for example "hot and cold." But there are no true opposites there, only differences of degree, more or less of the same thing. This bad habit has led us to try to understand and explain even our inner life, the world of the mind and of morals, in terms of such opposites. Because people imagined they saw opposites where there were really only gradual steps from one thing to another, a huge amount of cruelty, arrogance, harshness, distance, and coldness has crept into human feelings.

**68.**

CAN WE FORGIVE?—How can we forgive people at all if they do not know what they are doing? In that case there is nothing for us to

forgive. But does anyone ever fully know what he is doing? And if that question at least always stays open to doubt, then people never have anything to forgive each other, and for a reasonable person, letting someone off is simply impossible. And finally, even if the wrongdoers really had known what they were doing, we would still only have the right to forgive them if we had the right to accuse them and punish them. But we do not have that right.

## 69.

SHAME THAT BECOMES A HABIT.—Why do we feel ashamed when someone praises us for a virtue or an achievement that, as people say, "we have not earned"? Because it seems as if we have pushed our way into a place where we do not belong, a place we should be kept out of, like a holy temple or its most sacred inner room, where our feet should never step. Still, because of other people's mistakes, we have made our way in. Now we are moved partly by fear, partly by deep respect, and partly by surprise. We do not know whether we should run away, or enjoy this happy moment with all its pleasant benefits. In every kind of shame there is a mystery, something sacred that seems to be spoiled, or in danger of being spoiled, by us. Every favor we receive makes us feel shame.—But remember that we have never truly "earned" anything at all. If we give ourselves over to this way of seeing things, in a spirit of Christian reflection, then this feeling of shame becomes a constant habit. That is because, to such a person, God seems to be always giving his blessings and his favors. Even without this Christian explanation, a constant feeling of shame is possible for a wise man who believes in no God at all, as long as he holds firmly to the idea that no action and no being is ever truly responsible or truly deserving. If he is treated as though he had earned this or that, it will seem to him that he has slipped into a higher class of beings: beings who really do deserve things, who are free, and who can truly carry

the weight of responsibility for what they want and what they are able to do. So whoever says to him, "You have earned it," seems to be shouting at him, "You are not a human being, you are a God."

**70.**

THE CLUMSIEST TEACHER.—In one man, all his real good qualities are planted in the soil of his urge to disagree. In another, they are planted in his inability to say "no"—in other words, in his habit of going along with things. A third man has made all his morality grow out of his pride in being a loner. A fourth has made it grow out of his strong instinct for being with other people. Now, suppose that in these four cases, through bad luck or clumsy teachers, the seeds of these good qualities were not sown in the soil of each man's own nature, which is the richest and most fertile ground for them. Then they would turn into weak, disappointing men, with no real morality at all. And who would have been the clumsiest of teachers, the evil spirit that ruined these men? The moral fanatic, who thinks that good can only grow out of good, and only in the soil of good.

**71.**

THE CAREFUL STYLE.—A says: "But if everyone knew this, it would harm most people. You yourself say your opinions are dangerous for people who are already at risk, and yet you publish them?"

B answers: "I write in such a way that neither the mob, nor the masses, nor political groups of any kind can read me. So my opinions will never become 'public opinion.'"

A asks: "Then how do you write?"

B answers: "In a way that is neither useful nor pleasant—at least for the three groups I just named."

## 72.

MESSENGERS FROM GOD.—Even Socrates feels that he has been sent by a god on a mission. But I am not sure we shouldn't notice here a touch of that Athenian irony and love of joking, which would soften this unpleasant, arrogant idea. He talks about his mission without any holy solemnity. His images of the gadfly that stings the horse are simple, not priestly. The real religious life's mission he set himself was to test God in a hundred ways, to see whether God had told the truth. This shows a bold and free attitude, in which the messenger walked side by side with his God, as an equal. This testing of God is one of the cleverest compromises between religious devotion and free thinking that anyone has ever come up with.—These days we don't even need this compromise anymore.

## 73.

HONESTY IN PAINTING.—Raphael cared a great deal about the Church, at least as far as the Church could pay him. But, like the best men of his time, he cared little about the things the Church believed in. So he did not take a single step toward the demanding, ecstatic religious feeling that many of the people who paid him wanted. He stayed honest even in that unusual painting that was first meant to be a banner carried in a religious procession—the Sistine Madonna. For once he wanted to paint a vision. But it was the kind of vision that even noble young men without "faith" can and will have: the vision of the woman they will one day marry—a wise, noble-hearted, quiet, and very beautiful woman, holding her first child in her arms. Let the older men, who are used to prayer and worship, find something superhuman here to honor, like the respectable old man on the left side of the picture. "We younger men"—this is what Raphael seems to call out to us—"are busy looking at the beautiful young woman on the right." She looks out at the person viewing the picture with a bold,

not at all pious look, as if to say: "A mother and her child—isn't that a lovely, inviting sight?" Her face and her look are mirrored in the joy on the faces of the people looking at the picture. The artist who planned all this enjoys himself this way, and adds his own pleasure to the pleasure of the art lover. As for the "holy savior" expression on the child's face, Raphael—an honest man, who would not paint any feeling he did not believe in—kindly tricked his religious fans. What he painted was an odd natural quirk that you often see: a grown man's eyes in a child's face. And not just any man's eyes, but the eyes of a brave, helpful man who sees someone in trouble. Eyes like that should really come with a beard. The fact that the beard is missing, and that two different ages appear in one face, is a pleasing contradiction. Believers explained it in line with their faith in miracles. The artist could expect no less from their skill at explaining and interpreting things.

**74.**

PRAYER.—Prayer is a custom from old times that has not quite died out. It only makes sense if two things are true. First, it would have to be possible to pin down or change the will of God. Second, the person praying would have to know best what he needs and what he should really wish for. In all other religions, both of these ideas are taken for granted and handed down. Christianity denies both. Christianity believes in a divine reason that knows everything and provides for everything—a belief that makes prayer truly pointless, and even an insult to God. Even so, Christianity kept prayer alongside that belief. In doing this, it showed once again its remarkable "cunning of the serpent." Because if it had given a plain command, "You shall not pray," Christians would have grown bored, and that boredom would have led them to give up Christianity altogether. In the Christian motto "pray and work," praying plays the part of pleasure. Without

prayer, what could those unlucky saints who gave up work have done with themselves? But to have a chat with God, to ask him for all sorts of nice things, to feel a little amused at one's own foolishness in still having any wishes at all, despite having such an excellent father—all of that was a wonderful invention for saints.

**75.**

A HOLY LIE.—When Arria was dying, she told a lie. She had just stabbed herself, and she handed the dagger to her husband and said, "Paetus, it doesn't hurt." That lie outshines all the truths that dying people have ever spoken. It is the only holy lie that has become famous. Everywhere else, the smell of holiness has only clung to mistakes.

**76.**

THE MOST NEEDED APOSTLE.—Among twelve apostles, one must always be as hard as stone, so that the new church can be built on him.

**77.**

WHICH FADES FASTER, THE BODY OR THE SPIRIT?—In legal, moral, and religious institutions, the outward and physical parts last the longest—that is, the rituals, the gestures, and the ceremonies. They are like a body, into which a new spirit keeps being added. The forms of worship are like a text that never changes but is always being explained in new ways. Ideas and feelings flow and shift; customs stay solid.

**78.**

BELIEVING IN THE DISEASE AS A DISEASE.—Christianity was the first to paint the devil on the wall of the world, making people see him everywhere. Christianity was the first to bring the idea of sin into the world. The belief in the cure that it offered against this has slowly been shaken to its very foundations. But the belief in the disease, which Christianity taught and spread, is still alive.

**79.**

HOW RELIGIOUS PEOPLE SPEAK AND WRITE.—Look at the way a priest speaks and writes. If his style and the way he expresses himself don't clearly show that he is a religious man, then we no longer need to take seriously what he thinks about religion, or his arguments in favor of it. Suppose his style shows that he can use irony, arrogance, spite, hatred, and every swirl and shift of mood, just like the least religious person alive. Then those beliefs of his have lost their power over him. And how much less power will they have over the people who listen to him or read him! In short, he will only make them even less religious than before.

**80.**

THE DANGER OF MAKING GOD A PERSON.—The more people have thought of God as a real person in his own right, the less loyal they have been to him. People are much more attached to the pictures they create in their own minds than to the people they love most. That is why they give up their lives for the State, for the Church, and even for God, as long as God stays something they created, an idea of their own, and is not thought of too much as a person. When he is seen as a person, they almost always end up fighting with him. After

all, it was the most devout man of all who let out that bitter cry: "My God, why have you abandoned me?"

**81.**

JUSTICE IN THIS WORLD.—You can knock the ordinary justice of this world off its hinges by teaching that no one is ever responsible for what they do, and that everyone is innocent. People have also tried to do the same thing starting from the opposite teaching: that everyone is fully responsible and guilty. It was the founder of Christianity who wanted to do away with worldly justice and to drive judging and punishing out of the world. He saw all guilt as "sin," which means an offense against God, not against the world. On top of that, he thought that every person, in a broad sense and in almost every sense, was a sinner. But guilty people should not judge others who are just like them. That was what his idea of fairness decided. So in his eyes, everyone who handed out worldly justice was just as guilty as the people they condemned. Their look of innocence seemed to him two-faced and self-righteous, like the Pharisees. Besides, he paid attention to the reasons behind people's actions, not to the results. And he believed that only one being could see clearly enough to judge those reasons: himself, or, as he put it, God.

**82.**

A FALSE POSE WHEN LEAVING.—When someone wants to break away from a political party or a set of beliefs, he thinks he has to prove it wrong. That is a very arrogant idea. All he really needs to do is see clearly what grips, like tentacles, used to hold him to that party or belief and no longer do. He needs to see what ideas pushed him toward it and now push him in other directions. We did not join the party or belief because of solid, careful knowledge. So we should not pretend that we did when we leave it either.

## 83.

SAVIOR AND DOCTOR.—When it came to understanding the human soul, the founder of Christianity naturally had many big gaps and biases. And as a doctor of the soul, he was hooked on that cheap, amateur belief in a cure-all medicine. In his methods he is sometimes like a dentist who wants to cure every pain by pulling out the tooth. For example, he attacks bodily desire with the advice: "If your eye causes you to sin, tear it out." But there is still a difference. The dentist at least gets what he is after, which is to stop the patient's pain, even if he does it so clumsily that he looks ridiculous. The Christian who follows that advice, though, and thinks he has killed his bodily desires, is mistaken. His desires are still alive in an eerie, vampire-like form, and they torture him in ugly disguises.

## 84.

PRISONERS.—One morning the prisoners came out into the yard to work, but the guard was not there. Some of them got to work right away, as they usually did. Others stood around doing nothing and looked about them defiantly. Then one of them stepped forward and shouted, "Work as much as you like or do nothing at all, it makes no difference. Your secret plots have been found out. The guard has been watching you closely lately, and in a few days he will have a terrible sentence passed on you. You know him. He is cruel and holds grudges. But listen now: you have been wrong about me up to now. I am not what I look like. I am much more than that. I am the son of the guard, and I can get anything I want from him. I can save you. No, I will save you. But remember this: I will only save those of you who believe that I am the son of the prison guard. The rest of you can suffer the results of not believing." After a silence, an old prisoner said, "Well, why should it matter to you whether we believe you or not? If you really are his son, and you can do what you say, then put

in a good word for all of us. That would be truly kind of you. But stop all this talk about believing and not believing!" "What's more," shouted a younger man, "I don't believe him. He's just got a crazy idea stuck in his head. I bet that in a week we'll be right where we are today, and the guard won't know a thing." Just then the last of the prisoners came down into the yard and said, "And if the guard ever knew anything, he doesn't know it anymore, because he just died suddenly." Several of them cried out in confusion, "Aha! Aha! Mister Son, Mister Son, what about your title now? Are we by any chance your prisoners now?" The man answered gently, "I told you: I will set free everyone who believes in me, just as surely as my father is still alive." The prisoners did not laugh. They just shrugged and left him alone.

**85.**

THE PERSECUTORS OF GOD.—Paul came up with the idea, and Calvin carried it further, that countless beings were chosen ahead of time, from the beginning of time, to be damned forever. They also believed that this beautiful world was made just so that God's glory could be shown in it. So heaven and hell and all of humanity exist only to feed God's vanity! What a cruel, never-satisfied vanity must have been smoldering in the soul of the first or second person to think such a thought! So Paul, in the end, stayed Saul after all, the man who persecuted, only now he was persecuting God.

**86.**

SOCRATES.—If things go well, a time will come when people who want to move forward on the path of moral thinking will pick up the Memorabilia, the book of memories about Socrates, rather than the Bible. Montaigne and Horace will then be used as trailblazers and guides to help people understand Socrates, the simplest and longest-lasting of the wise men who explained life. In him, the roads of the

most different philosophical ways of living all meet. These ways of living are really the ways of different temperaments, hardened into shape by reason and habit, and in the end they all aim at enjoying life and enjoying oneself. So it seems that the most unusual thing about Socrates was that he had a share in every temperament. Socrates is greater than the founder of Christianity because of his cheerful way of being serious, and because of that wisdom full of playful, cheeky tricks, which is the best state a person's soul can be in. On top of that, he had a better mind.

## 87.

LEARNING TO WRITE WELL.—The age of fine public speaking is over, because the age of the culture of small city-states is over. Aristotle said a great city should be no bigger than the size where the town-crier can make himself heard by the whole gathered community. That limit bothers us as little as any city-community does, because we even want to be understood beyond the borders of our own nations. So everyone who thinks like a good European must learn to write well, and to write better and better. He has no choice; he must learn it, even if he was born in Germany, where bad writing is treated as a national right. Writing better means thinking better. It means always finding things more worth sharing. It means being able to share them properly. It means writing in a way that can be translated into the languages of neighbouring nations. It means making yourself clear to foreigners who learn our language. It means working so that everything good becomes shared by all, and so that free people have open access everywhere. And finally, it means preparing the way for a state of things that is still far off, when the great life's mission will fall to good Europeans: to guide and protect a culture shared by the whole world.—Anyone who preaches the opposite, telling people not to bother about good writing and good reading (these two strengths

grow together and fade together), is really showing nations how to become more and more narrowly national. He is making the sickness of this century worse. He is an enemy of good Europeans, an enemy of free thinkers.

**88.**

THE THEORY OF THE BEST STYLE.—At one time, the theory of the best style may be about finding the words that pass every one of our moods on to the reader and the listener. At another time, it may be about finding words for the better human moods, the ones we most want to share and pass on. That means the mood of a person who is moved from the bottom of his heart, who is cheerful in mind, bright, and honest, and who has mastered his passions. This will be the theory of the best style, a theory that matches the good person.

**89.**

PAYING ATTENTION TO MOVEMENT.—The way the sentences move shows whether the writer is tired. Single phrases may still be strong and good, because they were thought up earlier and for their own sake, when the idea first flashed into the writer's mind. This often happens with Goethe, who too often dictated his writing when he was tired.

**90.**

"ALREADY" AND "STILL."—The first speaker, A, says: German prose is still very young. Goethe says that Wieland is its father.

The second speaker, B, says: So young, and already so ugly!

A third speaker, C, says: But as far as I know, Bishop Ulfilas was already writing German prose, so it must be fifteen hundred years old.

B answers: So old, and still so ugly!

**91.**

ORIGINAL GERMAN.—German prose really isn't modelled on any pattern, and it has to be seen as something German taste created on its own. So it should give the eager supporter of a future, truly original German culture a hint of what real German clothes, German social life, German furniture, and German meals would look like if they didn't copy any models.—Someone who had thought about these prospects for a long time finally cried out in great horror: "But heaven help us, maybe we already have that original culture—we just don't like to talk about it!"

**92.**

FORBIDDEN BOOKS.—You should never read anything written by those arrogant know-it-alls and muddle-heads who have the awful habit of logical trickery. They use logical formulas exactly where everything is really just made up on the spot and built on thin air. (When they say "therefore," they mean: "You idiot of a reader, this 'therefore' isn't meant for you, only for me." The answer to that is: "You idiot of a writer, then why are you writing?")

**93.**

DISPLAYING ONE'S WIT.—Anyone who wants to show off his cleverness is also announcing that he has plenty of foolishness. Clever Frenchmen have a bad habit of adding a touch of disdain, a slight sneer, to their best ideas. This comes from wanting to seem richer in ideas than they really are. They want to look carelessly generous, as if they were tired of constantly spending from treasure chests that are too full.

## 94.

FRENCH AND GERMAN LITERATURE.—The bad luck of French and German literature over the last hundred years is this: the Germans left the French school too early, and later the French went to the German school too early.

## 95.

OUR PROSE.—None of today's cultured nations has prose as bad as the German. When clever, bored Frenchmen say, "There is no German prose," we really shouldn't get angry, because this criticism is more polite than we deserve. If we look for the reasons, we finally come to a strange fact: the German knows only prose that is made up on the spot, and has no idea that any other kind exists. He simply can't understand the Italian who says that prose is harder than poetry in the same way that, for a sculptor, showing naked beauty is harder than showing beauty in clothes. Even the German sees that verse, images, rhythm, and rhyme take real effort, and he doesn't think very highly of poetry made up on the spot. But the idea of working on a page of prose the way you would work on a statue sounds to him like a fairy tale.

## 96.

THE GRAND STYLE.—The grand style is born when beauty wins a victory over the monstrous.

## 97.

DODGING.—With great minds, we don't see what makes their way of expressing things, their way of putting words together, so excellent until we can say which word any average writer would surely have grabbed to express the same idea. All great artists, like drivers

steering a chariot, tend to swerve and leave the track, but they never tip over.

**98.**

SOMETHING LIKE BREAD.—Bread cancels out the taste of other food and clears it from your mouth. That is why every long meal needs bread. In the same way, every work of art must have something like bread in it, so that it can create many different effects. If those effects came one right after another, with no pauses or breaks now and then, they would quickly tire us out and even make us sick of them. In fact, without that kind of bread, a long meal of art would be impossible.

**99.**

JEAN PAUL.—Jean Paul knew a great many things, but he had no real knowledge. He understood all kinds of artistic tricks, but he had no art. He found almost everything enjoyable, but he had no taste. He had feeling and seriousness, but when he served them up, he poured a sickening sauce of tears over them. He even had wit, but sadly far too little for how badly he wanted it. So his very lack of wit drives the reader to despair. In short, he was a bright, bad-smelling weed that sprang up overnight in the lovely gardens of Schiller and Goethe. He was a good, easygoing man, and yet he was a fate, a fate in a bathrobe. (20)

**100.**

A TASTE FOR OPPOSITES.—If you want to enjoy a work from the past the way people of its own time enjoyed it, you must have a taste for the popular style of that age, the very style the work was attacking.

**101.**

PURE-ALCOHOL AUTHORS.—Many writers are neither spirit nor wine, but pure alcohol made from wine. They can catch fire, and then they give off warmth.

**102.**

THE SENSE THAT EXPLAINS.—The sense of taste is the true sense that explains things. It often talks the other senses into seeing things its way, and it forces its own rules and habits on them. At the dinner table you can learn the most delicate secrets of the arts. All you have to do is notice what tastes good, and when, and after what, and for how long it keeps tasting good.

**103.**

LESSING.—Lessing had a real French talent, and as a writer he studied very hard in the French school. He knows just how to arrange his goods and show them off in his shop window. Without this true skill, his ideas, like the things he wrote about, would have stayed rather in the shadows, and the world would not have lost much. Still, his skill has taught many people, especially the last generation of German scholars, and it has given pleasure to countless readers. It is true that his followers did not need to learn from him his unpleasant tone, a mix of crankiness and bluntness, though they often did.—Everyone now agrees about Lessing as a "lyric poet," and someday everyone will agree about Lessing as a "playwright" too.

**104.**

UNWANTED READERS.—How annoyed an author gets with those dull, clumsy readers who always fall down wherever they trip, and always hurt themselves when they fall!

**105.**

POETS' THOUGHTS.—The real thoughts of real poets always go around wearing a veil, like Egyptian women. Only the deep eye of the thought looks out freely through the veil.—As a rule, poets' thoughts are not worth as much as people think. We end up paying for the veil, and for our own curiosity on top of that.

**106.**

WRITE SIMPLY AND USEFULLY.—Smooth links between ideas, details, and color in describing strong feelings—we give all of these to the author as a gift. We bring them along ourselves and give his book the credit for them, as long as he gives us something in return.

**107.**

WIELAND.—Wieland wrote German better than anyone else, and he had the true strengths and the true weaknesses of a master. His translations of the letters of Cicero and Lucian are the best in the German language. His ideas, however, add nothing to our supply of thought. We can stand his cheerful moral lessons just as little as his cheerful lack of morals, because the two are very closely tied together. The people who enjoyed them were, deep down, better people than we are, but also a good deal slower and heavier. They needed an author like that. The Germans did not need Goethe, and so they cannot make proper use of him. Just look at the best of our statesmen and artists with this in mind. Not one of them had Goethe as a teacher, or could have had him.

**108.**

RARE FESTIVALS.—Short, punchy writing, calm, and maturity: when you find these qualities in a writer, stop right there and throw a big

party, like travelers celebrating in the middle of the desert. It will be a long time before you get a treat like that again.

**109.**

THE TREASURE OF GERMAN PROSE.—Leave aside Goethe's writings, and especially his conversations with Eckermann, which is the best German book there is. What other German prose is left that is worth reading again and again? Lichtenberg's Aphorisms, the first book of Jung-Stilling's Story of My Life, Adalbert Stifter's St. Martin's Summer, and Gottfried Keller's People of Seldwyla. And there, for now, the list stops.

**110.**

WRITTEN STYLE AND SPOKEN STYLE.—Above all, the art of writing has to find replacements for the tools that only speech has: gestures, stress on words, tone of voice, and the look in someone's eyes. That is why written style is very different from spoken style, and much harder. It has to make itself just as easy to understand as speech, but with fewer helpers. Demosthenes gave his speeches differently from the versions we read; he reworked them so they could be read. Cicero's speeches should be "Demosthenized" in the same way, for the same reason. Right now they have more of the noisy Roman marketplace in them than we can stand.

**111.**

BE CAREFUL WITH QUOTATIONS.—Young writers don't know that a good phrase or idea only looks good next to others just as good. They don't know that one excellent quotation can ruin whole pages, even the whole book. That's because the quotation seems to call out a warning to the reader: "Look, I am the jewel, and all around me is

lead, dull, worthless lead!" Every word and every idea only wants to live among its equals. That is the lesson of a carefully chosen style.

**112.**

HOW SHOULD MISTAKES BE STATED?—We can argue about which does more harm: stating mistaken ideas badly, or stating them as well as the best truths. One thing is sure. When they are stated badly, they do twice as much damage to the mind, and they are harder to get rid of. But on the other hand, they don't work on people as reliably as when they are stated well. In other words, they spread less easily.

**113.**

NARROWING AND WIDENING.—Homer narrowed and shrank the range of his subject, but he let single scenes grow and open up like flowers. Later, the writers of tragedy kept repeating this process. Each one took his material in smaller and smaller pieces than the writer before him. But each one grew a richer mass of flowers inside the narrow hedges of these small, hidden gardens.

**114.**

LITERATURE AND MORALITY EXPLAIN EACH OTHER.—Greek literature lets us show what forces made the Greek mind grow, how it went off in different directions, and where it grew weak. All of this also shows us how Greek morality developed, and how every morality will develop. At first it was a forced rule and showed cruelty. Then it slowly became gentler. Next, people began to take pleasure in certain actions, certain forms and customs. Out of that came a desire to practice them alone and to own them alone. Then the track gets crowded, and overcrowded, with rivals. People grow fed up, they look for new things to fight over and strive for, and old forgotten goals are brought

back to life. The play is performed again and again, until the audience gets completely tired of watching, because it seems every possibility has been tried. And then everything stops. It runs out, like little streams that disappear into the sand. The end has come, or at least an end.

**115.**

WHICH LANDSCAPES GIVE LASTING PLEASURE.—Some landscape may have features that are perfect for painting, and yet I can't find the formula for it. I can't take it in as a whole. I notice that every landscape that keeps pleasing me has, beneath all its detail, a simple pattern of geometric lines. Without that kind of mathematical base underneath, no scenery becomes pleasing as art. Maybe this rule can also be applied, as a symbol, to people.

**116.**

READING ALOUD.—To be able to read aloud, you also have to be able to perform a text dramatically, like an actor or speaker. When reading aloud we must always use soft, pale colors in our voice. But we have to judge how pale they should be by comparing them to a rich, deeply colored background that is always in our mind and guides us. In other words, we judge it by how we would perform the same passage dramatically. That is why we have to be able to perform dramatically.

**117.**

THE DRAMATIC SENSE.—Someone who lacks the four finer senses for art tries to understand everything with the fifth sense, which is the crudest of them all: the dramatic sense.

## 118.

HERDER.—Herder was not everything he made people believe he was, and not everything he himself wanted to believe he was. He was not a great thinker or discoverer. He was not freshly fertile ground with the untouched strength of a wild, ancient forest. But he had, to the highest degree, the ability to sniff out the future. He saw and picked the first fruits of each season before anyone else, and then people believed he had grown them. Between darkness and light, between youth and old age, his mind was like a hunter lying in wait. He looked everywhere for changes, dips, and upheavals, the outward, visible signs of growth happening inside. The restlessness of spring pushed him back and forth, but he himself was not the spring. Now and then, it's true, he had a feeling about this, and yet he didn't want to believe it. He was an ambitious priest who would have loved to be the pope of all the thinking of his age! This was his despair. He seems to have lived for a long time like someone claiming the right to several kingdoms, or even to rule the whole world. He had followers who believed in him, among them the young Goethe. But every time the crowns were actually handed out, he was left out. Kant, Goethe, and then the first real German historians and scholars took from him what he thought he had saved for himself (though quietly and secretly he often thought the opposite). Whenever he doubted himself, he was glad to dress himself up in dignity and enthusiasm. In him, these were often just costumes. They had to hide a great deal, and also to fool him and comfort him. He truly had fire and passion, but his ambition was much bigger! It blew impatiently on the fire, which flickered, crackled, and smoked. His writing style flickers, crackles, and smokes too. But he longed for the great blaze that never came. He did not sit at the table with the true creators, and his ambition would not let him sit humbly among those who simply enjoy things. So he was a restless mind, someone who tasted every dish of ideas that the

Germans gathered from every place and every age over half a century. Herder was never truly happy or satisfied, and he was also sick too often. Then sometimes envy sat by his bed, and hypocrisy came to visit as well. He always seemed wounded and crippled, and he lacked simple, sturdy manliness more completely than any of the so-called "classic writers."

**119.**

THE SMELL OF WORDS.—Every word has its own smell. Some smells go well together and some clash, and the same is true of words.

**120.**

THE FORCED, FANCY STYLE.—A writer who loves a forced, fancy style is offended by a style that is simple and natural.

**121.**

A PROMISE.—I will never again read an author who I suspect simply *wanted* to write a book. I will only read writers whose thoughts turned into a book without their planning it.

**122.**

THE RULES OF ART.—Three-quarters of Homer follows set rules and familiar patterns. The same is true of all the Greek artists. They had no reason to fall into the modern obsession with being original. They were not afraid of the usual rules, because those rules were, after all, a bridge between them and their audience. These shared rules are tools the audience has *learned* so that it can understand the work. They are a common language, learned with a lot of effort, through which the artist can truly get his ideas across. This matters even more

when the artist wants to win right away with each work, as the Greek poets and musicians did, since they were used to competing in public against one or two rivals. Then the first requirement is that he must be understood at once, and that is only possible by using the shared rules. Whatever the artist invents beyond those rules, he offers by his own free choice, and he takes a risk. At best, his success just ends up setting a new rule. As a rule, people are amazed by originality, and sometimes they even worship it, but they rarely understand it. Stubbornly avoiding the usual rules means wanting not to be understood. So what is the point of the modern obsession with originality?

**123.**

ARTISTS WHO PRETEND TO BE SCIENTISTS.—Schiller, like other German artists, believed that if a man was clever, he had the right to make things up on the spot, even in writing, about any difficult subject. So there we have his essays in prose. In every way they are a perfect example of how *not* to tackle serious questions about beauty and morals. They are also a danger to young readers, who admire Schiller the poet so much that they do not dare to think poorly of Schiller the thinker and writer.—It is easy, and forgivable, for an artist to be tempted, just once, to wander down forbidden paths and have his say in science too. Even the most gifted artist sometimes finds his craft and his workshop unbearable. This temptation is so strong that it makes the artist show the whole world something nobody wants to see: that the little room where he does his thinking is cramped and messy. And why not? He doesn't live there. Then he goes on to show that the storeroom of his knowledge is partly empty and partly full of junk. And why not? This state of things doesn't really look bad on the artist, who is a kind of child. Above all, the artist shows that even for the simplest exercises of scientific method, which even beginners can manage, his joints are too stiff and untrained. Even that is nothing he

really needs to be ashamed of! On the other hand, he often shows real skill in copying all the mistakes, bad habits, and petty fussiness that go on among scientists. He believes these belong to how science looks, even if not to what science really is. This is exactly what is so funny about artists' writing: without meaning to, the artist does what his calling demands. He makes fun of scientific, unartistic people by imitating them. Toward science, the only attitude he should take is that of mockery, as long as he is an artist and nothing but an artist.

**124.**

THE IDEA BEHIND FAUST.—A young seamstress is seduced and driven to despair. The wrongdoer is a great scholar who has mastered all four branches of university learning. Surely that can't have happened in the normal way of things? No, certainly not! Without the help of the devil himself in human form, the great scholar would never have managed to do it.—Is this really meant to be the greatest German "tragic idea," as you hear Germans say?—But even this idea was too terrible for Goethe. His kind heart could not help placing the little seamstress, "the good soul who forgot herself only once," close to the saints after her death, which she did not choose. Even the great scholar, "the good man" with "the dark urge," is brought into heaven just in time, through a trick played on the devil at the deciding moment. In heaven the two lovers find each other again. Goethe once said that his nature was too gentle and forgiving for truly tragic subjects.

**125.**

ARE THERE "GERMAN CLASSICS"?—The French critic Sainte-Beuve says somewhere that the word "classic" does not fit the nature of certain literatures. For example, he says, nobody could seriously talk about "German classics."—So what do our German publishers have to

say about that? They are about to add fifty more to the fifty German classics we are already told to accept. Doesn't it almost look as if a writer only needs to have been dead for thirty years, so that his books are free for anyone to print, (21) and then suddenly, out of nowhere, he hears the trumpet of resurrection calling him back as a "Classic"? And this happens in a time and a nation where at least five of the six great founding fathers of its literature are clearly out of date, or are becoming out of date. And there is no need for the time or the nation to be ashamed of this. Those writers have simply given way before the strength of our own time—let's be fair and remember that!—As I have already suggested, I do not count Goethe among them. He belongs to a higher kind than "national literatures." So the usual ideas of being alive, coming back, or fading away do not apply to how he stands with his own countrymen. He lived, and still lives, only for a few people. For most people he is nothing but a showy decoration of vanity, something the Germans trumpet now and then across the border so that foreigners will hear it. Goethe was not only a great and good man; he was a whole *culture* in himself. In German history he is an interlude that nothing followed. For instance, who could point to any trace of Goethe's influence in German politics over the last seventy years? By contrast, you can certainly trace Schiller's influence in the political world, and perhaps Lessing's too. But what about those five others? Klopstock went out of date even while he was still alive, and he did so in a very honorable way. It happened so completely that the thoughtful book of his later years, *The Republic of Learning*, has never been taken seriously from that day to this. Herder's bad luck was that his writings were always either new or already old. So for stronger and sharper minds, like Lichtenberg, even Herder's greatest work, his *Ideas for the History of Mankind*, was in a way out of date at the very moment it came out. Wieland lived life to the full and helped others do the same. He was clever enough to die before his influence could fade. Lessing may still be alive today—but only among a young and

ever younger group of scholars. Schiller has slipped out of the hands of young men into the hands of boys, of all German boys. It is a well-known sign that a book is getting old when it is passed down to readers who are younger and less grown-up each time.—So what has pushed these five into the background, so that well-educated, practical men no longer read them? A better taste, a more mature knowledge, a deeper respect for what is real and true. In other words, it is the very virtues that these five (and ten or twenty other less famous writers) were the first to plant again in Germany. And now those virtues have grown like a mighty forest, and they cast over the graves of these writers not only a shadow of awe, but also something of a shadow of being forgotten.—But classic writers are not the ones who plant the virtues of the mind and of literature. They bring those virtues to perfection. They are the highest shining peaks of those virtues. Because they are brighter, freer, and purer than everything around them, they go on shining above the nations even when the nations themselves die. A higher stage of humanity may come, when the Europe of separate peoples is a dark, forgotten thing. But Europe will live on in thirty books that are very old but never out of date—in the classics.

## 126.

INTERESTING, BUT NOT BEAUTIFUL.—This landscape hides its meaning, but it does have one, and we would like to guess it. Everywhere I look, I can read words and hints of words. But I don't know where the sentence begins that would solve the riddle of all these hints. So I end up with a stiff neck from turning my head, trying to work out whether I should start reading from this spot or from that one.

**127.**

AGAINST PEOPLE WHO INVENT NEW LANGUAGE.—Using newly made-up words or very old-fashioned ones, preferring what is rare and strange, trying to make the vocabulary bigger rather than keeping it within limits—these are always signs of a taste that is either not yet mature or has gone bad. The Greek masters of public speaking stood out for something different: a noble poverty of words, but a masterly freedom inside the limits of that modest supply. They wanted to have fewer words than ordinary people have—because ordinary people are richest in both old and new words—but they wanted to use those few words *better*. You can quickly count up the old-fashioned and foreign forms they used. But if you have an eye for it, you will never stop being amazed at how lightly and delicately they handled the everyday words and phrases that seemed long worn out.

**128.**

GLOOMY AUTHORS AND SERIOUS AUTHORS.—A person who writes down his sufferings while he is suffering becomes a gloomy author. But he becomes a serious author if he tells us what he *has* suffered, and why he is now enjoying a pleasant rest.

**129.**

HEALTHY TASTE.—Why is health less catching than disease—in general, and especially when it comes to taste? Or are there epidemics of health too?

**130.**

A RESOLUTION.—Never again to read a book that is born and baptized (in ink) at the very same moment—that is, a book written and published in a rush, without time to grow.

**131.**

IMPROVING OUR IDEAS.—Improving our writing style means improving our ideas, and nothing else. Anyone who does not agree with this right away can never be convinced of it.

**132.**

CLASSIC BOOKS.—The weakest point of every classic book is that it is written too much in its author's native language.

**133.**

BAD BOOKS.—A book should call for a pen, ink, and a desk. But usually it is the pen, ink, and desk that call for a book. That is why books count for so little these days.

**134.**

PRESENCE OF SENSE.—When the public thinks about paintings, it turns into a poet. When it thinks about poems, it turns into a researcher. So at the moment the artist calls on the public, it is always missing the right sense. What it lacks, then, is not presence of mind, but presence of the right sense.

**135.**

CAREFULLY CHOSEN IDEAS.—The carefully chosen style of an important period does not only pick its words, but also its ideas—and it picks both from what is usual and widely used. Daring ideas that smell too fresh are just as distasteful to a more mature taste as new and reckless images and phrases. Later on, both the chosen ideas and the chosen words soon start to taste of the average, because the fine

scent of the choosing fades quickly, and then all you can taste is the usual and the commonplace.

**136.**

THE MAIN REASON STYLE GOES BAD.—Wanting to show more feeling about something than you really feel ruins style, both in language and in every art. All great art shows rather the opposite tendency. Like every person of real moral worth, great art likes to hold back emotion along the way and not let it run all the way to the end. This modesty of letting emotion show only halfway can be seen most clearly in Sophocles, for example. The face of a feeling seems to become more beautiful when the feeling pretends to be shyer than it really is.

**137.**

AN EXCUSE FOR THE HEAVY STYLE.—A phrase said lightly rarely hits the ear with the full weight of what it is about. But this comes from an ear that has been badly trained. Through education, the ear has to move on from what people have so far called music to the school of a higher harmony—in other words, to conversation.

**138.**

BIRD'S-EYE VIEWS.—Here, rushing streams pour from every side into a deep, narrow valley. They move so fast and so wildly, and pull the eye along so quickly, that the mountain slopes around them, some bare and some covered in trees, seem not to slope downward but to fly downward. Looking at it, we feel a painful tension, as if something hostile were hiding behind it all, something everything had to run away from, and only the deep pit below could protect us from it. You cannot paint this landscape unless you float above it like a bird in the

open sky. Here, for once, the so-called bird's-eye view is not just an artist's whim. It is the only way it can be done.

**139.**

RASH COMPARISONS.—When a writer makes careless, over-the-top comparisons, it shows one of two things. Either he is just showing off and playing around, or his imagination has run dry. Either way, it proves he has bad taste.

**140.**

DANCING IN CHAINS.—With every Greek artist, poet, or writer, we should ask: What new limit does he put on himself, and make attractive to the people of his time, so that others copy him? Because what we call "invention" (in the rhythm of poetry, for example) is always a chain of this kind that the artist puts on himself. "Dancing in chains"—making things hard for themselves and then spreading the false idea that it is easy—that is the trick they want to show us. Even in Homer we can see a large stock of inherited set phrases and rules for telling long heroic stories. He had to dance inside that circle of rules, and he himself created new rules for the poets who came after him. This was the training of the Greek poets. First, they took on many limits passed down from earlier poets. Then they invented a new limit on top of those, put it on themselves, and happily overcame it, so that people could see and admire both the limit and the victory over it.

**141.**

AUTHORS' COPIOUSNESS.—The very last skill a good author gains is the ability to write at length and in abundance. Anyone who has

this from the start will never become a good author. The finest racehorses stay lean until they are allowed to rest after their victories.

**142.**

WHEEZING HEROES.—Some poets and artists have a narrow chest when it comes to feelings; their emotional range is small. They usually make their heroes wheeze and gasp. They simply do not know what it means to breathe easily.

**143.**

THE SHORT-SIGHTED.(22)—Short-sighted people are the deadly enemies of all authors who ramble on without control. These authors should know how angrily such readers slam shut a book when they notice the writer needs fifty pages to say five ideas. The reason for their anger is that they have strained what is left of their eyesight and got almost nothing back for it. One short-sighted person said, "All authors ramble on." Someone asked, "Even the Holy Ghost?" He answered, "Even the Holy Ghost." But the Holy Ghost had the right to, because he wrote for people who had gone completely blind.

**144.**

THE STYLE OF IMMORTALITY.—Thucydides and Tacitus, two ancient historians, both pictured their works living forever when they wrote them. Even if we did not know this some other way, we could guess it from their style. One of them tried to make his ideas last by salting them, like preserved food, giving them a sharp, biting flavor. The other did it by boiling them down until only the thick, packed essence was left. And it seems neither of them was wrong.

**145.**

AGAINST IMAGES AND SIMILES.—With pictures and comparisons we can persuade people, but we cannot prove anything. That is why science hates pictures and comparisons so much. Science does not want to persuade or to make things just seem likely. Instead, through the way it speaks, through its bare, undecorated walls, it tries to stir up cold doubt. Because doubt is the test stone that shows whether certainty is real gold.

**146.**

CAUTION.—In Germany, anyone who does not know a subject thoroughly should be careful about writing on it. In that case the good German does not say "he doesn't know enough," but "he has a questionable character."—This quick jump to a conclusion, by the way, speaks very well of the Germans.

**147.**

PAINTED SKELETONS.—Painted skeletons are those authors who try to cover up their lack of flesh, their lack of real substance, with artistic coloring.

**148.**

THE GRAND STYLE AND SOMETHING BETTER.—It is easier to learn to write in the grand style than to learn to write easily and simply. The reasons for this are tangled up, beyond separating, with morality.

**149.**

SEBASTIAN BACH.—Most of us do not listen to Bach's music as perfect, experienced experts in counterpoint and all the kinds of fugue writing, and so we have to do without true artistic enjoyment of it. To that extent, when we listen to his music we will feel—in Goethe's wonderful words—as if "we were present at God's creation of the world." In other words, we feel that something great is being made here but is not finished yet—our mighty modern music. This music has conquered nations, the Church, and counterpoint, and so it has conquered the world. In Bach there is still too much rough Christianity, rough Germanness, and rough old-school learning. He stands at the doorway of modern European music, but from there he turns around to look back at the Middle Ages.

**150.**

HANDEL.—When Handel was coming up with his musical ideas, he was bold, original, truthful and powerful. He leaned toward, and felt related to, all the heroism that a whole *nation* is capable of. Yet when he actually wrote the music down, he often turned out stiff and cold, and was even tired of himself. He used a few tried-and-tested techniques, wrote a lot and wrote fast, and was glad when he was done. But that gladness was not the joy that God and other true creators feel in the evening, at the end of their day's work.

**151.**

HAYDN.—As far as a man who is simply *good* can have genius, Haydn had genius. He went exactly as far as the line that morality draws around the mind, and no further. So he only wrote music that has "no past", that is, music with nothing dark or troubled behind it.

**152.**

BEETHOVEN AND MOZART.—Beethoven's music often sounds like a deeply moved daydream. It is as if he suddenly heard again a piece he thought he had long forgotten, a piece called "Innocence in Sound". In that sense it is music about music. He finds his tunes in the song of a beggar or a child in the street, in the repetitive tunes of wandering Italian street musicians, in dances at the village pub, or on carnival nights. He gathers them up like a bee, grabbing a few notes or a short phrase here and there. To him these are sacred memories of "a better world", like Plato's perfect ideas.—Mozart's relationship to his tunes is completely different. He does not get his inspiration from hearing music but from looking at life, especially the lively, exciting life of the sunny south. Whenever he was not in Italy, he was always dreaming of it.

**153.**

RECITATIVE.—Recitative, the half-spoken, half-sung part of an opera, used to be dry. But now we live in the age of soggy recitative. It has fallen into the water, and the waves carry it wherever they like.

**154.**

"CHEERFUL" MUSIC.—If we have gone a long time without hearing any music, then when we do hear it, it rushes into our blood far too fast, like a strong, heavy southern wine. It leaves the soul dazed, as if drugged, half awake and longing to sleep. This is especially true of cheerful music. It fills us with bitterness and pain, with being fed up and homesick, all at once. And it makes us sip at it again and again, as if it were a sweetened drink of poison. The hall full of happy, noisy fun then seems to get smaller, and the light seems to lose its brightness and turn browner. In the end we feel as if this music were reach-

ing into a prison cell, where some poor soul cannot sleep because he is so homesick.

**155.**

FRANZ SCHUBERT.—As an artist, Franz Schubert was not as great as the other great composers. Even so, he was born with the biggest share of musical riches. He spent those riches generously and kindly, so that for several centuries musicians will go on *nibbling* at his ideas and inspirations. In his works we find a whole store of *unused* inventions, and other composers will become great by putting those inventions to use. If Beethoven can be called the perfect listener for a wandering singer, then Schubert has the right to be called the perfect wandering singer himself.

**156.**

MODERN WAYS OF PERFORMING MUSIC.—The big tragic or dramatic way of performing music gets its character by copying the body language of the great sinner, as Christianity imagines him and wants him to be. He is the man who walks slowly, brooding with passion, torn apart by the torment of his guilty conscience. One moment he runs away in terror, the next he grabs at something with delight, then he stands still in despair—along with all the other signs of great sinfulness. Only if we accept the Christian belief that all people are great sinners and do nothing but sin could we justify playing *all* music in this style. In that case, music would mirror everything people do and feel, and it would have to keep acting out the language of the great sinner. At a performance like this, a listener who was not Christian enough to follow this logic might well cry out in horror: "For heaven's sake, how did sin get into music?"

## 157.

FELIX MENDELSSOHN.—Felix Mendelssohn's music is the music of good taste, the kind of taste that enjoys every good thing that has ever existed. It always points backward. So how could it have much ahead of it, much of a future?—But did he even want it to have a future? He had a quality that is rare among artists: gratitude with no hidden motive behind it. And this quality, too, always points backward.

## 158.

A MOTHER OF THE ARTS.—In our doubting age, real religious devotion takes an almost brutal, heroic kind of ambition. Blindly shutting your eyes and getting down on your knees is no longer enough. Ambition might be eager to be the very last true believer of all time. So could it not become the parent of one final kind of church music, just as it has already been the parent of the final style of church building? (People call that the Jesuit style.)

## 159.

FREEDOM IN CHAINS—A PRINCE'S FREEDOM.—Chopin was the last of the modern composers who looked at beauty and worshipped it, like the poet Leopardi. Chopin the Pole, the one who cannot be copied (no one before him or after him deserves that title). Chopin was as royally careful about following the rules as Raphael was in using the simplest, most traditional colours. The only difference is that Chopin did this not with colours but with the traditions of melody and rhythm. He accepted these traditions because he was born into a world ruled by good manners and formal custom. But inside these chains he plays and dances like the freest and most graceful of spirits—and notice this: he does not throw the chain away.

**160.**

CHOPIN'S BARCAROLLE.—Almost every situation and way of life has a moment of pure delight, and good artists know how to find that moment. There is such a moment even in life by the seaside—that dull, grubby, unhealthy existence, dragged out among a noisy and greedy crowd of people. Chopin captured this moment of delight in sound in his Barcarolle, a boat song, so perfectly that even the gods, on hearing it, might long to lie in a boat through long summer evenings.

**161.**

ROBERT SCHUMANN.—The romantic songwriters of Germany and France in the first thirty years of this century dreamed up a figure they called "the Youth". Robert Schumann, the forever-young man, turned this youth completely into song and melody, for as long as he felt fully in control of his powers. Still, there are moments when his music reminds you of the eternal "old maid".

**162.**

DRAMATIC SINGERS.—One person asks: "Why is this beggar singing?" Another answers: "Probably because he doesn't know how to wail." The first says: "Then he's doing the right thing." But what about our opera singers, who wail because they don't know how to sing—are they doing the right thing too?

**163.**

DRAMATIC MUSIC.—For someone who cannot see what is happening on stage, dramatic music is a freak, just as a running commentary on a lost text is a freak. This kind of music asks us to have ears where our eyes are. But that is an act of violence against Euterpe, the Muse

of music. The poor Muse wants to keep her eyes and ears in the same place where the other Muses keep theirs.

**164.**

WINNING AND BEING RIGHT.—Artists start arguments about beauty and taste with their works, and with the speeches they make to defend those works. Sadly, in these arguments, just as in real war, it is strength and not good reasoning that decides who wins. Today everyone takes it as a fact of history that Gluck was in the right in his quarrel with Piccini. In any case, he won, and he had strength on his side.

**165.**

ON THE RULE FOR PERFORMING MUSIC.—Do today's musicians really believe that the highest rule of their art is to make every piece stand out as boldly as possible, and to make it speak in a dramatic way no matter what? Take Mozart, for example. Isn't this rule a true crime against his spirit—his cheerful, sunny, light and delicate spirit? Mozart was serious, yes, but in a kind way, not in a frightening way. His musical pictures don't try to jump off the wall and send the viewer running in panic. Or do you think all of Mozart's music is like the music of the stone statue in Don Juan? And not just Mozart's music, but all music?—You answer that the good thing about your rule is that it makes a bigger impression. You would be right, except that there is still a question to ask back: "Who is being impressed? And who should a truly great artist want to impress?" Never the common crowd! Never the immature! Never the sickly oversensitive! Never the ill! And above all—never people who are bored and have seen it all!

## 166.

THE MUSIC OF TODAY.—This extremely modern music has strong lungs but weak nerves. It is loud, but jumpy, and more than anything else it is afraid of itself.

## 167.

WHERE MUSIC FEELS AT HOME.—Music reaches its highest point only among people who are not able to argue, or are not allowed to. That is why its main supporters are princes, who want there to be little criticism, and even little thinking, around them. Next come groups of people who, under some kind of pressure, political or religious, are forced to get used to keeping quiet. So they need, all the more, some magic to chase away the boredom of their feelings. Usually that magic is endless romance and endless music. Third, we must count whole nations where there is no real social life, but where there are many more people who lean toward being alone, toward mystical thinking, and toward deep respect for everything that cannot be put into words. These are the true "musical souls." The Greeks, as a people who loved talking and arguing, therefore put up with music only as a side dish to the arts that can actually be discussed and argued over. You can hardly even think clearly about music. The Pythagoreans, who were unusual Greeks in many ways, are said to have been great musicians. This was the school that invented a five-year rule of silence, but did not invent a method of debate.

## 168.

SENTIMENTALITY IN MUSIC.—We may feel very close to serious and deep music. Yet even so, or maybe exactly because of that, there will be moments when we are overwhelmed, enchanted, and almost melted by its opposite. I mean those simple Italian opera songs. Their

rhythm is always the same and their harmony is childish, yet sometimes they seem to sing to us like the very soul of music. You fussy, self-righteous judges of good taste can admit this or not, as you like—but it is true. And my job right now is to set out the riddle of why it is true, and to take a small bite at the answer myself.—When we were children, we tasted the sweetness of many things for the first time. Nothing was ever as sweet as it was then. That sweetness tempted us into life, into a full and rich life, in the form of the first spring, the first flower, the first butterfly, the first friendship. Then, maybe around the age of nine, we heard our first music, and it was the first music we understood. So the simplest, most childish tunes—hardly more than a follow-up to the nanny's lullaby and the street fiddler's song—were our first experience of music. (Because even the smallest "revelations" of art need preparation and learning. Art never works on us "instantly," no matter what charming stories the philosophers tell.) What we feel when we hear these Italian songs is tied to those first joys of music, which were the strongest joys of our lives. The happiness of childhood, and how quickly it flew away, and the feeling that our most precious treasure can never come back—all this strikes the strings of the soul harder than the most serious and deep music can. —Today people usually call this mix of artistic pleasure and moral pain "sentimentality"—a bit too snobbishly, in my opinion. It is the mood Faust is in at the end of the first scene. This "sentimentality" in the listener works completely in favor of Italian music. It is a feeling that experienced art experts, the pure lovers of beauty, like to ignore. —Besides, almost all music only works its magic on us when we hear it speaking the language of our own past. So to ordinary people, it seems that all old music keeps getting better, and that all the newest music is worth little. The new music stirs up no "sentimentality." And as I said, that feeling is the most important part of happiness for anyone who cannot enjoy this art purely for its beauty.

## 169.

AS FRIENDS OF MUSIC.—In the end, we are and stay good friends with music, just as we are with moonlight. After all, neither of them tries to take the sun's place. They only want to light up our nights as well as they can. Still, we may tease them and laugh at them, can't we? Just a little, at least, now and then? At the man in the moon, and at the woman in the music?

## 170.

ART IN AN AGE OF WORK.—We have the conscience of a hard-working age. This conscience stops us from giving our best hours, and the best part of our days, to art, even if that art is the greatest and most worthy kind. For us, art is something for our free time, for relaxing, and we give it only the leftovers of our time and energy. This is the key fact that has changed how art fits into life. When art asks for a lot of time and energy from the people who take it in, it has to fight against the conscience of busy, hard-working people. So it gets pushed off onto the lazy and the people with no sense of duty. But those people, by their very nature, are not really suited to great art, and they think its demands are arrogant. So it might be all over for art, because it has no air and no room to breathe. But perhaps great art tries to make itself at home in that other atmosphere, or at least to put up with it, by making itself a bit coarser and putting on a disguise. That atmosphere is really only natural for small art, the art of relaxing and of pleasant distraction. This happens almost everywhere nowadays. Even the people who make great art promise relaxation and distraction. Even they speak to the worn-out person. Even they ask him for the evening hours of his working day, just like the artists of the entertainment kind, who are happy just to smooth a wrinkled forehead and brighten a dull, tired eye. So what tricks do their more powerful brothers use? In their medicine cabinets they keep the strongest stim-

ulants, strong enough to give a jolt even to a man who is half dead. They can deafen you, make you drunk with feeling, make you shiver, or bring tears to your eyes. In this way they overpower the exhausted man and whip him up, for one night, into an over-excited state, into a wild thrill of terror and delight. This great art, as it lives today in opera, tragedy, and music—do we have the right to be angry with it because of its dangerous charm, the way we would be angry with a clever, scheming seductress? Certainly not. It would much rather live in the pure air of a calm morning. It would much rather speak to the fresh, eager, energetic morning-mind of the person watching or listening. Let us be grateful that it chooses to live this way rather than disappear completely. But let us also admit this: a time that once again brings real, free, full holidays and days of celebration back into life will have no use for our great art.

**171.**

THE EMPLOYEES OF SCIENCE AND THE OTHERS.—Scientists who are truly capable and successful could all be called "the Employees." If, when they are young, their sharp thinking has been trained well enough, their memory is well stocked, and their hands and eyes have become steady and sure, then an older person in the same trade gives them a scientific post where their skills can be useful. Later, once they themselves have learned to spot the gaps and weak points in their science, they put themselves wherever they are needed. All these people exist for the sake of science. But there are rarer minds, minds that seldom succeed or fully ripen—minds "for whose sake science exists," or at least that is how they see it. They are often unpleasant, full of themselves, or hard to get along with, but almost always they are, to some degree, a kind of wonder. They are neither employees nor bosses. They use what the others have worked out and proven, with a sort of royal carelessness, and they give little praise

and seldom, as if the others were a lower kind of creature. And yet they have the same qualities as their fellow workers, and sometimes in a less developed form. On top of that, they have a special limitation that the others do not have. Because of it, you cannot put them in a post and treat them as useful tools. They can only live in their own air and on their own ground. This limitation tells them which parts of a science "belong to them"—in other words, what they can carry home into their own house and their own atmosphere. They believe they are always gathering up their own scattered "property." If they are stopped from building their own nest, they die like birds with no shelter. Losing their freedom makes them wither away. If, like their colleagues, they show a liking for certain areas of science, it is always only areas where the fruits and seeds they need can grow. What do they care whether science as a whole has fields left unplowed or plowed badly? They have no impersonal interest at all in a scientific problem. Since they themselves are personal through and through, all their knowledge and ideas get reshaped into a person, into a living, complicated whole, whose parts depend on each other, overlap, and are fed together, and which as a whole has its own special atmosphere and scent.—People like this, with their system of personal knowledge, create the illusion that a science (or even all of philosophy) is finished and has reached its goal. The life inside their system works this magic. At times this magic has been deadly for science and has fooled the truly capable workers described above. At other times, when things were dry and worn out, it has worked like a kind of tonic, like the air of a cool, refreshing place to rest.—These men are usually called philosophers.

**172.**

RECOGNITION OF TALENT.—As I was walking through the village of S., a boy started cracking his whip as hard as he could. He had

gotten very good at this skill, and he knew it. I gave him an approving look—but really, the noise hurt me terribly. We do the same thing when we praise many talents. We do them a kindness at the very moment they are hurting us.

**173.**

LAUGHING AND SMILING.—The more joyful and confident the mind becomes, the more a person loses the habit of laughing out loud. To make up for it, a thoughtful smile is always bubbling up in him. It is a sign of his amazement at the countless hidden pleasures of a good life.

**174.**

THE TALK OF INVALIDS.—When we are grieving in our hearts, we pull our hair, hit our foreheads, scratch our cheeks, or even (like Oedipus in the old Greek story) tear our eyes out. In the same way, when we are in fierce bodily pain, we call up a bitter, violent feeling to help us. We do this by remembering people who have lied about us and wished us harm, by painting our future in dark colors, and by stabbing and striking, in our minds, at people who are not there. And sometimes it is true that one devil drives out another—but then we are stuck with the second one.—So sick people should be advised to use a different kind of talk, one that eases pain: thinking about the kind and polite things they could do for both friends and enemies.

**175.**

MEDIOCRITY AS A MASK.—Being ordinary is the best mask a superior mind can wear. That is because it does not make the great majority—that is, the ordinary people—suspect that there is any disguise at all. And yet the superior mind puts on the mask precisely for their

sake, so as not to annoy them, and often, in fact, out of a feeling of pity and kindness.

**176.**

THE PATIENT ONES.—The pine tree seems to be listening, and the fir tree seems to be waiting, and neither of them is in any hurry. They don't spare a single thought for the tiny human being down below, who is eaten up by his impatience and his curiosity.

**177.**

THE BEST JOKE.—My favorite joke is the one that stands in for a heavy idea, one that is a bit unsure of itself. A joke like that beckons you with its finger and winks at you, both at the same time.

**178.**

WHAT ALL RESPECT NEEDS AROUND IT.—Wherever people honor the past, the overly clean and overly tidy kind of people should be kept out. Deep respect for old things doesn't feel at home without a little dust, dirt, and rubbish.

**179.**

THE GREAT DANGER FOR SCHOLARS.—It is precisely the most thorough and deep-thinking scholars who are at risk of seeing their life's goal set lower and lower. And as they sense this happening, they risk growing more and more discouraged, and harder and harder to put up with, in the second half of their lives. At the start, they throw themselves into their field of study with huge hopes. They set themselves bold missions, and their imaginations already picture how those missions will end. Then come moments like those in the lives of the great explorers who sailed the seas. Knowledge, hunches, and

strength push each other higher and higher, until at last a new shore first appears far off on the horizon. But now this serious man realizes more and more how important it is to keep each researcher's own job as narrow as possible. That way the job can be finished completely, and the unbearable waste of effort that troubled science in earlier times can be avoided. Back then, everything was done ten times over, and then the eleventh person always got the last and best word. Still, the more the scholar learns and practices this skill of solving puzzles completely, the more he enjoys doing it. But at the same time, he becomes stricter and stricter about what counts as "complete." He puts aside everything that has to stay unfinished in this sense. He becomes disgusted by anything that can only be half solved, and he develops a sharp nose for it—for anything that can only give a sort of certainty in a broad and vague way. His youthful plans fall apart before his eyes. Almost nothing is left except a few little knots, and the master now takes his pleasure and shows off his strength by untying them. Then, right in the middle of all this useful, busy work, he—now an old man—is often suddenly hit by a deep doubt, a kind of guilty pain in his conscience. He sees himself as someone who has changed, as if he had shrunk, been made smaller, been turned into a clever little *dwarf*. He starts to worry that being a master of small things might just be the comfortable choice—a way of escaping the call to greatness in how he lives and who he is. But he can't go *beyond* that anymore. The time for that has passed.

**180.**

TEACHERS IN THE AGE OF BOOKS.—Now that people are teaching themselves and teaching each other more and more, the ordinary kind of teacher is bound to become almost unnecessary. Friends who are eager to learn and want to master some subject together can find, in

our age of books, a quicker and more natural way to do it than "school" and "teachers."

**181.**

VANITY AS THE MOST USEFUL THING OF ALL.—In the beginning, the strong person treats not only nature but also whole communities and weaker people as things to grab and plunder. He takes as much from them as he can, and then he moves on. He lives from one day to the next, swinging back and forth between going hungry and having far too much. So he kills more animals than he can eat, and he robs and mistreats people more than he needs to. When he shows his power, it is also a kind of revenge against his own cramped and anxious life. On top of that, he wants people to think he is more powerful than he really is, and so he takes advantage of every chance to look that way. The more fear he creates, the more power he gains. He soon notices that whether he rises or falls depends not on what he really *is*, but on what people *think* he is. That is where vanity comes from. The man of power tries in every possible way to make others believe more strongly in his power.—The servants who tremble before him and work for him know, for their part, that they are worth only as much as he thinks they are worth. So they work with an eye on how he judges them, rather than on whether they are pleased with themselves. We only know vanity in its weakest forms—in its prettied-up versions and in small doses—because we live in a late stage of society that has lost much of its strength and toughness. In the beginning, vanity is the most useful thing of all, the strongest way to stay alive. And in fact, the cleverer a person is, the greater his vanity will be. That's because it is easier to make people believe you are more powerful than it is to actually become more powerful. But this only works for someone who has brains, or, as must be true in primitive times, someone who is sly and cunning.

## 182.

SIGNS OF THE WEATHER IN CULTURE.—There are so few clear signs that tell us what the "weather" of a culture is like, that we should be glad to have at least one sign that never fails, one we can use at home and in the garden. If we want to test whether a man is one of us (I mean one of the free thinkers) or not, we have to test how he feels about Christianity. If he looks at Christianity with anything other than a critical eye, we turn our backs on him, because he brings us dirty air and bad weather.—It is no longer our life's mission to teach such men what a sirocco is, that hot, heavy wind that ruins the air. They have Moses and the prophets of weather and of clear thinking.(24) If they will not listen to these, then——

## 183.

THERE IS A RIGHT TIME FOR ANGER AND PUNISHMENT.—Anger and punishment are things we inherited from the animals. Man does not truly grow up until he has handed this gift from his cradle back to the animals.—Buried in this thought is one of the most powerful ideas people can have: the idea of a progress that is greater than all other progress.—Let us move forward together a few thousand years, my friends! There is still a great deal of joy saved up for mankind, joy so far away that not even its scent has yet reached the people of our time! In fact, we can promise ourselves this joy. More than that, we can call it up and summon it as something that must come, as long as human reason does not stop growing. Some day we will no longer put up with the error in logic that hides in all anger and punishment, whether it comes from one person or from society as a whole. That day will come when the head and the heart have learned to live as close together as they are now far apart. And it is quite plain, if you look at the whole history of humanity, that they no longer stand as far apart as they did at the start. A person who can

look back over a life spent working on understanding himself will notice how much closer the two have come. He will feel proud and happy at the distance he has crossed, and this will give him the courage to hope for even bigger things.

**184.**

WHERE PEOPLE WITH A GLOOMY OUTLOOK COME FROM.—A bite of good food often decides whether we look at the future with empty, tired eyes or in a hopeful mood. The same thing is true even for the highest and most thoughtful states of mind. For people today, being unhappy with the world and cursing it is something inherited from half-starved ancestors. Even in our artists and poets we often see this. However full of life they are, they do not come from good stock. From ancestors who were kept down and badly fed, they have often inherited, in their blood and in their brains, a great deal that shows up in their work, both as its subject and even as the mood they knowingly give it. The culture of the Greeks was a culture of well-off people, in fact of people whose wealth had been handed down for generations. For a few centuries they lived better than we do. They lived better in every way, and especially much more simply in what they ate and drank. In the end their brains became so well filled and so fine, and their blood flowed so fast, like a happy, clear wine, that the best in them no longer came out dark, twisted and violent, but full of beauty and sunshine.

**185.**

ON A SENSIBLE DEATH.—Which makes more sense: to stop a machine once its parts have done the job they were meant to do, or to let it keep running until it stops by itself—in other words, until it breaks down? Isn't the second choice a waste of what it costs to keep it going? Isn't it a misuse of the strength and care of the people who

look after it? Aren't people here throwing away something that is badly needed somewhere else? And doesn't it spread a kind of disrespect for machines, when so many of them are looked after and kept going for no purpose?—I am talking about death that is not chosen (natural death) and death that is chosen (sensible death). Natural death has nothing to do with reason. It is really an unreasonable death. In it, the poor, weak material of the shell decides how long the kernel inside will go on living. So the one in charge is the stunted, sick, dim-witted jailer, the body, and he decides the moment when his noble prisoner, the mind, must die. Natural death is nature killing itself. In other words, it is the destruction of the most reasonable being by the most unreasonable part that is tied to it. Only in the light of religion can it look the other way around. Then, fairly enough, the higher reason (God) gives its orders, and the lower reason has to obey. But outside of religious thinking, natural death is nothing to praise. Choosing and arranging death wisely belongs to the morality of the future. Today that morality seems completely impossible to understand and even sounds immoral, but it will be a joy beyond words to see it begin to dawn.

**186.**

INFLUENCES THAT PULL BACKWARD.—All criminals push society back to earlier stages of culture than the one it has reached at the time. Their influence pulls things backward. Think about the tools society has to build and keep up to protect itself: the clever detectives, the jailers, the executioners. We should not forget the public lawyers who accuse and defend either. Finally, we may ask ourselves whether the judge himself, and punishment, and the whole legal system, do not weigh people down rather than lift them up, in the way they affect everyone who is not a lawbreaker. For we will never manage to dress up self-defence and revenge in the clothes of innocence. And as long

as people are used and sacrificed as tools for the good of society, everyone with a higher sense of humanity will be sad that this has to happen.

**187.**

WAR AS A MEDICINE.—For nations that are growing weak and contemptible, war may be prescribed as a medicine, if they really do want to go on living. A nation wasting away, like a person wasting away from a disease, can be treated with a harsh cure. But the endless will to live and the inability to die is, in itself, already a sign that the feelings have grown old and feeble. The more fully and deeply we live, the more ready we are to give up our life for a single feeling of joy. A people that lives and feels this way has no need of war.

**188.**

MOVING THE MIND AND THE BODY AS CURES.—Each culture is like its own climate for the mind. Each one is especially harmful or especially good for this or that kind of living thing. History as a whole, seen as the knowledge of many different cultures, is the study of cures. But it is not the skill of healing itself. We still need a doctor who knows how to use these cures, so that he can send each person, for a while or for good, to the climate that fits him best. Living only in the present, inside the borders of just one culture, does not work as a cure for everyone. Too many very useful kinds of people cannot breathe freely in that air, and they would die out. With the help of history, we must give them air and try to keep them alive. Even people from simpler cultures have their worth.—On top of this healing of minds, humanity must also think about the health of the body. Using a kind of medical map of the world, people must work to find out what kinds of decline and sickness each region of the earth causes. And the other way around, they must find out what the earth

offers that makes people healthy. Then, step by step, nations, families, and single people must be moved to new places, and stay there long enough and for good, so that they can overcome the bodily weaknesses they were born with. In the end, the whole world will be one long chain of places for healing.

**189.**

REASON AND THE TREE OF HUMANKIND.—You are all afraid that the world will have too many people. You fear this because you are old and cannot see far. But that very thing gives a huge life's mission to people who are more hopeful. One day, humankind is meant to become a tree that spreads its shade over the whole earth. It will have millions and millions of buds, and they will all grow into fruit side by side. And the earth itself will be made ready to feed this tree. The young shoot is still tiny. We must help it grow full of sap and strength, and help that sap flow through countless channels to feed the whole tree and all its parts. From jobs like these, we must take our measure for judging whether a person living today is useful or worthless. This life's mission is hugely great and daring. Let us all do our part to stop the tree from rotting before its time! A mind trained in history will surely be able to picture what people have done through all the ages, just as we can see an ant colony with its cleverly built hills right in front of us. If we judge only by the surface, we might say that humankind as a whole, like the ants, works by "instinct." But when we look more closely, we see how whole nations, and even whole centuries, work hard to find and try out new ways to help the great mass of people, and so, in the end, to help the great shared fruit tree of the world. Whatever harm the separate nations or ages may suffer during this testing, each of them has grown wiser through that harm. And from them, wisdom slowly spreads like a rising tide over the basic beliefs of whole races and whole eras. Ants,

too, lose their way and make mistakes. And humankind may well fall apart and be ruined before its time, because of the foolish cures it tries. Neither the ants nor humankind have a sure instinct to guide them. Instead, we must bravely take on the great life's mission of making the earth ready for a plant that will bear the richest and most joyful fruit. This is a mission that reason sets for reason itself!

**190.**

WHY PEOPLE PRAISE UNSELFISHNESS, AND WHERE THAT PRAISE CAME FROM.—Two chiefs who lived next to each other had been fighting for a long time. They wrecked each other's lands, stole each other's cattle, and burned down each other's houses. But on the whole, neither side ever really won, because they were about equally strong. A third chief lived far away, so he could stay out of their fights. Still, he had reason to fear the day when one of the two neighbours would become clearly stronger than the other. So at last he stepped in between the fighters, with formal and friendly ceremony. In secret, he gave real weight to his offer of peace. He let each of them understand that from now on he would team up with the other one against whichever of them tried to break the peace. The two chiefs met in front of him. Slowly and unsure of themselves, they put into his hand the very hands that until then had been the tools of their hatred, and far too often the cause of it too. And then they really and truly tried to keep the peace. Each of them was amazed to see how quickly his wealth and his comfort grew. Instead of a sneaky enemy, or one who openly mocked him, he now had a neighbour who was a trader, ready to buy and sell. When unexpected troubles came, they could even help each other out of trouble. Before, each would have taken advantage of the other's trouble and made it as bad as possible. It even seemed as if the people in both countries had become better people. Their eyes were brighter, and their foreheads had lost their

worried wrinkles. Everyone now trusted the future, and nothing does more good for people's minds and bodies than this kind of trust. Every year, on the day the peace was made, they all met again: the chiefs as well as their followers. And they did this in front of the go-between, the man who had made peace between them. The more they gained thanks to him, the more they admired and honoured the way he had acted. Then people began to call the way he acted unselfish. Until then, they had stared so hard at what they themselves had gained that they noticed only one thing about how their neighbour had dealt with them. They saw that his own situation had not changed as much as theirs had. He had pretty much stayed the same. And so it looked as if he had not been thinking of his own gain at all. For the first time, people told themselves that unselfishness was a virtue, a good quality. It is true that similar things had happened before in small, private matters. But people only noticed this virtue when it was painted on the walls, so to speak, in huge letters that the whole community could read. Moral qualities are not seen as virtues, given names, respected, and recommended as worth having, until the moment when they have clearly decided the happiness and the fate of whole societies. Because at that moment, many people feel such high and noble emotion, and their inner creative powers are so stirred up, that they bring gifts to this quality. They offer it the best of what each of them owns. At its feet the serious man lays down his seriousness, the dignified man his dignity, women their gentleness, and the young all the rich hope and future that is inside them. The poet gives it words and names. He sets it marching in a parade together with other qualities like it. He gives it a family tree. And finally, as artists tend to do, he worships the picture he has imagined as if it were a new god. He even teaches other people to worship it. So in the end, with the help of everyone's love and gratitude, a virtue becomes like a statue. It becomes a place where everything good and honourable is stored, a kind of temple and holy person rolled into one. From then on it seems

to be a virtue standing on its own, a complete thing in itself, which it was not before. And it uses the power and the special rights of something holy and more than human.—In the later days of ancient Greece, the cities were full of such ideas about human qualities that had been turned into gods, if we can call them that. In its own way, the nation had built on earth what the philosopher Plato called a "Heaven of Ideas." And I do not think people felt that these beings were any less alive than the old gods in Homer's poems.

**191.**

DARK DAYS.—In Norway, "Dark Days" is the name for the time of year when the sun stays below the horizon all day long. During that time the temperature drops, slowly but without stopping.—This is a good picture for all thinkers who feel that the sun of humanity's future has been blotted out for a while.

**192.**

THE PHILOSOPHY OF LUXURY.—A garden, some figs, a little cheese, and three or four good friends: that was what luxury meant to Epicurus.

**193.**

THE TRUE STAGES OF LIFE.—The real stages of life are those short pauses that come halfway between the rise and the fall of an idea or a feeling that rules over us. In these pauses we feel satisfied once more. All the rest of the time is hunger and thirst, or else being too full.

**194.**

DREAMS.—Usually a dream is a clumsy, badly made piece of work. But once in a while our dreams succeed and come out complete.

When they do, they are chains of scenes and pictures that stand for something, instead of a story told in poetic language. They retell what we have lived through, what we hope for, or our relationships with others, and they do it with the boldness and sharpness of a poet. That is why, in the morning, we are always surprised at ourselves when we remember what kind of dream we had. In our dreams we use up too much of our artistic skill, and so we often have too little of it during the day.

**195.**

NATURE AND SCIENCE.—In science, just as in nature, people first work the poorer land that grows less. That is because the tools science has in its early days are good enough for that kind of land. Working the richest land takes a huge method that has been carefully built up and is kept going patiently. It needs real results that each person can see and hold, and an organised team of well-trained workers. All these things only come together at a late stage.—Impatience and ambition often reach too early for the richest land. But then the results are worthless from the very start. In nature, such mistakes would usually be paid for by the settlers starving to death.

**196.**

THE SIMPLE LIFE.—Living a simple life is hard these days. It takes much more careful thought and much more talent for inventing things than even very clever people have. The most honest people will perhaps still say: "I don't have time for such long thinking. The simple life is too high a goal for me. I will wait until people wiser than me have figured it out."

**197.**

MOUNTAIN PEAKS AND NEEDLE POINTS.—The highest and most educated minds, and the social classes they come from, tend to have few children. They often never marry, and in general they have little interest in sex. This is necessary in the way the human race manages itself. Intelligence sees this and makes use of a fact: when a mind reaches the very top of its development, there is a great danger that its children will be nervous and unstable. Such people are the mountain peaks of humanity. They should not go on to taper off into thin, fragile needle points.

**198.**

NATURE MAKES NO JUMPS.—A person may grow upward very strongly, and may seem to leap from one opposite position to another. But if you look closely, you will find the joints where the new building grows out of the old one. This is the job of anyone who writes the story of someone's life: he must think about his subject by the rule that nature never jumps.

**199.**

CLEAN, BUT—Someone who dresses in rags that have been washed clean is dressed cleanly, that's true, but he is still in rags.

**200.**

THE LONELY PERSON SPEAKS.—A lonely life without friends, books, duties, or passions brings a lot of disgust, discouragement, and boredom. But to make up for it, we get to enjoy those short stretches of time when we feel deeply connected with ourselves and with Nature. Whoever builds a complete wall against boredom also builds

a wall against himself. He will never drink the strongest magic drink, the one that flows from the deepest spring inside himself.

**201.**

FAME THAT ISN'T EARNED.—I hate those so-called natural beauties that only matter because of science, especially geography, but that mean little when it comes to actual beauty. One example is the view of Mont Blanc from Geneva. Without the extra mental pleasure that comes from knowing the scientific facts, it is a minor sight. The closer mountains are all more beautiful and more expressive. "But they are not nearly as high," adds that silly science, trying to make them look small. Here the eye disagrees with science. So how can the eye really enjoy itself when it is being contradicted like that?

**202.**

PEOPLE WHO TRAVEL FOR FUN.—They climb mountains like animals, dull-minded and sweating. Nobody remembered to tell them that there were lovely views along the way.

**203.**

TOO MUCH AND TOO LITTLE.—People today live too much and think too little. They are hungry and have indigestion at the same time, so they keep getting thinner and thinner, no matter how much they eat. Anyone who says today, "Nothing has happened to me," is a fool.

**204.**

ENDING AND GOAL.—Not every ending is the goal. The ending of a tune is not its goal. And yet, if a tune has not reached its ending, it

has not reached its goal either. Think of this as a picture of something bigger.

**205.**

NATURE'S HUGE INDIFFERENCE.—The way great Nature does not care about us—in mountains, sea, forest, and desert—is pleasant, but only for a short while. After that we grow impatient. "Do none of these things have anything to say to us? Do we simply not exist as far as they are concerned?" A feeling comes over us that a crime is being committed against humanity, as if a king were being insulted.

**206.**

FORGETTING WHY WE STARTED.—When we are on a journey, we usually forget where we were heading. Almost every job is chosen and begun as a way to reach some goal, but then people keep doing it as if the job itself were the final goal. Forgetting our purpose is the most common kind of foolishness.

**207.**

THE SUN'S PATH OF AN IDEA.—When an idea is just rising over the horizon, like the morning sun, the soul usually feels quite cold toward it. Little by little the idea grows warmer, and it is at its hottest —meaning it has its biggest effect—at the very time when people's belief in it is already fading.

**208.**

HOW TO TURN EVERYONE AGAINST YOU.—If someone today dared to say, "Whoever is not for me is against me," everyone would immediately be against him.—This attitude speaks well of our times.

## 209.

BEING ASHAMED OF BEING RICH.—Our time puts up with only one kind of rich person: the kind who is ashamed of his money. When we hear that someone is very rich, we immediately feel something like what we feel when we see a sick person who is disgustingly swollen, someone suffering from diabetes or from a disease that fills the body with fluid. We have to make an effort to remember our human kindness, so that we can deal with this rich man without him noticing how disgusted we are. But as soon as he shows any pride in his money, our feelings get mixed with an almost pitying surprise that a human being can be so unreasonable. We would like to raise our hands to the sky and cry out: "You poor, misshapen, overloaded creature, chained up a hundred times over! Every hour brings you, or could bring you, something unpleasant. Every event that happens in dozens of countries makes your body twitch. How can you expect us to believe that you feel comfortable where you are? Whenever you show up in public, we know it is like walking between two lines of people who are all staring at you, and those stares hold nothing for you but cold hatred, pushy demands, or silent contempt. You may make money more easily than others, but it is only extra money you don't need, which brings little joy. And by now, at least, guarding what you have earned is more trouble than any hard work it took to earn it. You are always suffering, because you are always losing. What good does it do you that they keep pumping fresh artificial blood into you? That does not ease the pain of the blood-sucking cups that are stuck to your neck, stuck there forever!—But to be completely fair to you, it is hard, maybe impossible, for you not to be rich. You have to guard it, you have to earn more. The habits of character you were born with are a heavy wooden yoke tied onto you, like the one on an ox. But don't trick us because of that. Be honestly and openly ashamed of the yoke you wear, since deep in your soul you are tired of

wearing it and don't want to. This kind of shame is nothing to be embarrassed about."

**210.**

OVER-THE-TOP ARROGANCE.—Some people are so full of themselves that the only way they can praise a great thing they openly admire is by describing it as steps and bridges leading up to themselves.

**211.**

ON THE GROUND OF INSULT.—Someone who wants to take an idea away from people is usually not happy just to disprove it and pull out the worm of bad logic that lives inside it. Instead, once the worm is dead, he throws the whole fruit into the mud too, so that people will see it as low and feel disgusted by it. He thinks he has found a way to stop ideas from doing what they usually do: rising from the dead on the third day.—But he is wrong. Right there on the ground of insult, in the middle of the dirt, the core of the idea soon produces new seeds.—So the right thing is not to sneer at and splatter what you want to get rid of for good. Instead, you should gently lay it on ice, again and again, keeping in mind that ideas cling to life very stubbornly. Here we must follow the rule: "Disproving something once is not disproving it at all."

**212.**

WHAT HAPPENS TO MORALITY.—Since the chains on people's minds are loosening, morality—meaning the inherited, traditional, instinctive way of acting according to moral feelings—is surely fading too. But this is not true of the separate virtues: self-control, justice, and calm. That is because the greatest freedom of the thinking mind

will at some point lead back to these virtues, even without meaning to, and will then recommend practicing them because they are useful.

**213.**

THE MAN WHO TAKES DISTRUST TOO FAR, AND HIS GUARANTEE.—The Old Man says: You want to take on this huge risk and teach mankind about the great things? What guarantee can you offer?

Pyrrho: It is this. I mean to warn people against myself. I mean to admit all the flaws in my character, completely openly, and show the world my rushed conclusions, the ways I contradict myself, and my silly mistakes. "Don't listen to me," I will tell them, "until I have become as low as the lowest person among you, or even lower. Fight against the truth for as long as you can, because the person speaking for her disgusts you. If you see in me even the faintest glimmer of respectability and dignity, then I will be the one who leads you astray and betrays you."

The Old Man: You are promising too much. You can't carry that weight.

Pyrrho: Then I will tell people that too. I will say that I am too weak and can't keep my promise. The less worthy I am, the more they will distrust the truth when it comes out of my mouth.

The Old Man: So you plan to teach people to distrust the truth?

Pyrrho: Yes. Distrust like the world has never seen before: distrust of anything and everything. This is the only road to truth. Your right eye must not trust your left eye, and for a while you must call light darkness. That is the path you have to walk. Don't imagine it will lead you to fruit trees and lovely green fields. On this road you will find small, hard grains, and those are truths. For years and years you will have to swallow handfuls of lies just so you don't starve, even though you

know they are lies. But those grains will be sown and planted, and maybe, just maybe, one day the harvest will come. Nobody is allowed to promise that day, unless he is a fanatic.

The Old Man: My friend, my friend! Your words sound like a fanatic's too!

Pyrrho: You're right! I will distrust all words.

The Old Man: Then you'll have to stay silent.

Pyrrho: I will tell people that I have to stay silent, and that they should distrust my silence.

The Old Man: So you are backing out of your plan?

Pyrrho: Quite the opposite. You have shown me the door I have to walk through.

The Old Man: I'm not sure we fully understand each other yet.

Pyrrho: Probably not.

The Old Man: If only you understood yourself!

(Pyrrho turns around and laughs.)

The Old Man: Ah, my friend! Silence and laughter—is that your whole philosophy now?

Pyrrho: There could be worse ones.

**214.**

EUROPEAN BOOKS.—When we read Montaigne, La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère, Fontenelle (especially his "Dialogues of the Dead"), Vauvenargues, and Chamfort, we come closer to the ancient world than we do with any group of six writers from any other country. Through these six, the spirit of the last centuries before Christ has

come to life once again. Together they make up an important link in the great chain of the Renaissance, a chain that still goes on today. Their books rise above all the shifts in national taste and all the small shades of philosophy. As a rule, every book takes on its color from those things, and has to, if it wants to become famous. But these books do not. They hold more real ideas than all the books of German philosophers put together. They are ideas of the kind that give birth to more ideas—I don't know how to finish describing them. It is enough to say that these seem to me writers who wrote neither for children nor for dreamers, neither for young innocent girls nor for Christians, neither for Germans nor for—and again I don't know how to finish my list. To praise them in simple words, I can say this: if they had been written in Greek, the Greeks would have understood them. On the other hand, how much would even a Plato have understood of the writings of our best German thinkers, Goethe and Schopenhauer, for example? And that's not even mentioning the disgust he would have felt at their style, especially at its unclear, overblown, and sometimes dull and dusty parts. These are faults that these two suffer from less than other German thinkers, and yet they still suffer from them far too much. (As a thinker, Goethe liked to hug the clouds more than he should have, meaning he loved vague, foggy ideas. And Schopenhauer almost always wanders among symbols of things rather than among the things themselves, and he pays a price for it.)—By contrast, what clearness and graceful exactness we find in these Frenchmen! The Greeks, who had the finest ears of all, would surely have approved of this art. And there is one quality they would even have admired and honored: the French gift for clever, witty wordplay. The Greeks loved this quality very much, even though they were not especially good at it themselves.

## 215.

FASHION AND BEING MODERN.—Wherever people are still mostly ignorant, dirty, and superstitious, where travel and contact with others lag behind, where farming is poor and priests are powerful, people still wear national costumes. Fashion, on the other hand, is in charge where the opposite is true. So in modern Europe, fashion is found right next to the virtues. Should we call it their ugly underside? —When a man wears clothes that are fashionable and no longer national, his clothes announce several things about him. First, he does not want to stand out as an individual, or as a member of a class or a race. He has made it a personal rule to hold back these kinds of vanity on purpose. Second, he is a worker. He has little time for dressing up and decorating himself, and he feels that anything expensive or luxurious, in fabric or in cut, does not fit with his work. Last, his clothes show that, as a European, he feels closest to the more learned and thinking professions, or would like to be close to them. The national costumes that still exist, by contrast, would show the robber, the shepherd, and the soldier as the most desirable and respected jobs. Inside this general pattern of men's fashion, there are small ups and downs. These are demanded by the vanity of young men, the dandies and idlers of our big cities. In other words, they come from Europeans who have not yet grown up.—European women are still much less grown up, and that is why their fashions swing about much more. They, too, refuse the national costume, and they hate to be recognized by their clothes as German, French, or Russian. But they very much want to make an impression as individuals. Their clothes also must leave no one in doubt that they belong to one of the more respectable classes of society, to "good" or "high" or "great" society. And on this point they claim all the more, the less they actually belong to that class, or if they do not belong at all. Above all, a young woman does not want to wear what an older woman wears. She thinks she loses

her value on the market if anyone suspects she is getting on in years. The older woman, on the other hand, would like to fool the world for as long as possible by dressing young. Out of this competition, short-lived fashions keep springing up, in which youthfulness shows itself in a way that is plain to see and impossible to copy. For a while, the inventive talent of young female artists runs wild in these bold displays of youth. Or rather, the inventive talent of older, courtly civilizations and of peoples still living today, in fact the whole world of clothing, gets put to work. For example, Spanish, Turkish, and ancient Greek styles get harnessed together to show off lovely skin. But after all that, women discover once again, as they do again and again, that they have not judged their own interests well. They find that if they want power over men, a game of hide-and-seek with the beautiful body is more likely to win than naked or half-naked honesty. And then the wheel of taste and vanity turns once more in the opposite direction. The somewhat older young women find that their time to rule has come, and the competition among these dear, silly creatures starts raging all over again.—But the more women grow in mind, and stop giving first place among themselves to an age that is not yet ripe, the smaller the swings in their clothing become, and the less fancy their decoration. A fair judgment on this matter must not be based on ancient examples. That is, it should not use the clothing of women who live on the shores of the Mediterranean as its standard. Instead, it must take into account the climate of the central and northern regions, where Europe's thinking and creative spirit now feels most naturally at home.—So, generally speaking, the mark of fashion and of being modern will not be change. Change is a step backward, and it is a sign of the men and women of Europe who are still not ripe. The real mark will be the rejection of national, social, and personal vanity. For this reason, it deserves praise when certain cities and regions of Europe do the thinking and inventing in matters of clothing for everyone else. This saves time and energy, since it seems that not everyone

has been given a sense of form. And as long as these swings in fashion still exist, it is not really too ambitious for Paris, for example, to claim to be the only inventor and innovator in this area. Suppose a German hates these claims by a French city and wants to dress differently, for example in the style of the old painter Dürer. Let him think about this: he would then be wearing a costume that Germans wore in the old days, but which Germans did not invent in the slightest. For there has never been a style of dress that marked a German as a German. Also, let him take a look at how he appears in this costume, and ask whether his completely modern face, with all its colors and wrinkles, does not protest against a Dürer-style outfit.—Here, where the ideas "modern" and "European" mean almost the same thing, we understand "Europe" to be a much wider area than the Europe on the map, which is just the little peninsula sticking out of Asia. In particular, we must include America, insofar as America is the daughter of our civilization. On the other hand, not all of Europe counts as cultured "Europe." Only those nations and parts of nations count that share a common past in Greece, Rome, Judaism, and Christianity.

## 216.

"GERMAN VIRTUE."—No one can deny that, starting at the end of the eighteenth century, a wave of moral awakening flowed through Europe. Only then did Virtue find her voice again. She learned to make wild, unrestrained gestures of excitement and strong feeling. She was no longer ashamed of herself, and she created philosophies and poems to praise herself. If we look for where this wave came from, we come to Rousseau. But it is not the real Rousseau. It is the legendary Rousseau, a ghost-like figure built from the impression his writings left behind (one could almost say, again, from his writings as people read them like legends) and from the hints he gave about himself. He and his readers kept working, over and over, at shaping this

ideal figure. The other source lies in the rebirth of the Stoic side of Rome's greatness, the side of firm self-discipline. Through this, the French carried on the life's mission of the Renaissance in a very noble way. With remarkable success, they moved from copying ancient forms to copying ancient characters, that is, ancient kinds of people. Because of this, they can always claim the highest honors, as the nation that has so far given the modern world its best books and its best people. This double model, the legendary Rousseau and the reborn spirit of Rome, had a strong effect on France's weaker neighbors, and you can see this especially in Germany. Germany felt a new and very unusual urge toward seriousness, toward high goals in the will, and toward self-control. In the end, she became amazed at her own newly found virtue. She then put out into the world the idea of "German virtue," as if it were her most original possession, something she had inherited from long ago. The first great men who took that French urge toward greatness and toward awareness of the moral will into their own blood were more honest about it, and more grateful. Where does Kant's strong focus on morals come from? He keeps reminding us himself: from Rousseau and from the revival of Stoic Rome. Schiller's moral focus has the same source, and he praises that source in the same way. Beethoven's moral focus, expressed in music, is one long song praising Rousseau, the French who revived the ancient world, and Schiller. The movement called "Young Germany" was the first to forget to be grateful, because in the meantime people had been listening to preachers who taught hatred of the French. The "young German" stepped forward with more self-awareness than young people are usually given credit for. When he looked into who his fathers were, he could well think of how close he stood to Schiller, Schleiermacher, and Fichte. But he should have looked for his grandfathers in Paris and Geneva. It was very short-sighted of him to believe what he believed: that virtue was no more than thirty years old. People got used to demanding that the word "German" should also

mean "virtue," and this habit has not been completely forgotten even today.—It should also be noted that this moral awakening, as one might almost guess, has only brought drawbacks and obstacles to actually *understanding* moral matters. What is the whole of German philosophy, starting from Kant, with all its French, English, and Italian branches and side products? It is a half-religious attack on Helvetius. It is a rejection of the views and road signs pointing the right way, which had been gained slowly and with great effort, and which he, in the end, gathered together and expressed so well. To this day, Helvetius is the most insulted of all good students of human nature and good men in Germany.

**217.**

CLASSIC AND ROMANTIC.—There are always two kinds of minds: the classical kind and the romantic kind. Both of them hold a vision of the future. But the classical minds draw their vision from the strength of their time, and the romantic minds draw theirs from its weakness.

**218.**

THE MACHINE AS TEACHER.—Machines, just by existing, teach large numbers of people how to work together, fitted into each other like puzzle pieces, in jobs where each person has only one thing to do. The machine is the model for how political parties are organized and how wars are fought. On the other hand, it does not teach a person to glorify himself as an individual. That is because it turns the many into one machine, and turns each single person into a tool with only one purpose. Its most general effect is to teach how useful it is to bring everything under one central control.

## 219.

UNABLE TO SETTLE.—People like living in a small town. But every now and then, that very small town drives us out into empty, lonely nature, especially when we think we know the town too well. Then, in the end, to get some fresh energy after nature, we go to the big city. We take a few sips from this cup, and soon we see the dirty leftovers at the bottom. Then the circle starts all over again, with the small town as the starting point.—That is how modern people live. In everything, they are a bit too thorough to be able to settle down the way people did in earlier times.

## 220.

REACTION AGAINST THE CIVILISATION OF MACHINERY.—The machine is itself the product of the highest powers of the mind. Yet it puts into action almost nothing but the lower, unthinking powers of the people who work it. It is true that it sets free a huge amount of energy that would otherwise just lie asleep. But it does not pass on the urge to climb higher, to get better, to become artistic. It creates busyness and sameness. In the long run, though, this produces the opposite effect: a hopeless boredom of the soul. Through the machine, the soul has learned to long for the variety that free time brings.

## 221.

THE DANGER OF ENLIGHTENMENT.—Think of all the half-mad, showy, cruel-as-a-beast, unrestrained, and above all the sentimental and self-intoxicating parts that make up the real stuff of revolution. Before the revolution, all of this took on flesh and spirit in Rousseau. This whole mixed-up creature, with its fake enthusiasm, in the end even set "enlightenment," the spread of reason and knowledge, on its

own fanatical head. Because of this, enlightenment itself began to shine, as if it were a glowing halo around that head. Yet enlightenment is, at its core, foreign to that whole thing. If it had been left alone, it would have passed quietly through the clouds like a beam of light. For a long time it would have been content to change only individual people, and in that way it would only slowly have changed the customs and institutions of nations too. But now it was tied hand and foot to a violent and sudden monster, and so enlightenment itself became violent and sudden. Because of this, its danger has become almost greater than the useful thing it brought into the great revolutionary movement: freeing people and shedding light. Anyone who understands this will also know what confusion enlightenment has to be pulled out of, and what dirt it has to be cleaned of. Only then can it carry on the work of enlightenment by itself, and also stop the revolution before it grows and cancel out its effects.

**222.**

PASSION IN THE MIDDLE AGES.—The Middle Ages are the time of great passions. Neither the ancient world nor our own time has this kind of widening of the soul. Never was the soul able to hold more, or measured by bigger standards. Think of the raw, ancient, bodily appetites of the barbarian peoples, and the over-emotional, over-watchful, over-bright eyes of the Christian mystics. Think of the most childlike and youthful, and the most over-ripe and tired of the world. Think of the wildness of a beast of prey, and the softness and far-too-delicate refinement of the late ancient mind. All these things were, quite often in those days, joined together in one and the same person. So when a man was gripped by a passion, the flood must have rushed faster, the whirlpool must have been more confused, and the fall must have been deeper than ever before.—We modern people may be satisfied to feel that we have lost something here.

**223.**

ROBBING AND SAVING.—Every movement of ideas that lets the powerful hope to grab things, and lets ordinary people hope to save money, is sure to do well. That is why, for example, the German Reformation was so successful.

**224.**

HAPPY SOULS.—Whenever there was even the faintest hint of drinking, getting drunk, and a crude, foul-smelling kind of joking, the souls of the old Germans grew cheerful. The rest of the time they were gloomy, but here at last they found something they truly understood.

**225.**

WILD LIVING IN ATHENS.—Even after the fish-market of Athens had its own thinkers and poets, Greek wild living still looked more charming and refined than Roman or German wild living ever did. If the Roman poet Juvenal had raised his angry voice there, it would have sounded like an empty, booming trumpet. People would have answered him with a kindly, almost childlike burst of laughter.

**226.**

HOW CLEVER THE GREEKS WERE.—The wish to win and to stand above others is a part of human nature that can never be pulled out. It is older and more basic than any respect for equality or any pleasure in it. So the Greek State officially allowed contests in sport and in the arts between equals. In other words, it set up an arena where this urge to conquer could let off steam without putting the political order at risk. When the sports and arts contests finally died away, the Greek State fell into deep unrest and began to break apart.

## 227.

THE "ETERNAL EPICURUS."—Epicurus has lived in every age, and he is still alive today. But the people who called themselves Epicureans, and still do, never knew him, and philosophers have never given him any fame. He has even forgotten his own name. That was the heaviest piece of luggage he ever threw away.

## 228.

THE STYLE OF ACTING SUPERIOR.—"University slang," the way German students talk, started with the students who do not actually study. These students know how to get the upper hand over their more serious classmates. They do it by pointing out everything that is silly about culture, good manners, learning, order, and self-control. They always have words from these areas on their lips, just like the better and more learned students do, but with a nasty look in their eyes and a mocking face to go with it. This language of acting superior is the only truly original way of speaking in Germany. And nowadays even politicians and newspaper critics use it without realizing it. It is a never-ending habit of quoting things with a sneer, a restless, grumpy glancing out of the corner of the eye to the left and right. It is a language made of quotation marks and pulled faces.

## 229.

THE PERSON WHO WITHDRAWS.—We pull back and live apart from others. But not because of personal worries, as if we were unhappy with the political and social conditions of our time. Rather, by withdrawing, we try to save up and gather strength that culture will one day badly need. The more the present becomes truly itself, and carries out its life's mission as the present, the more that strength will be needed. We are building up savings and trying to keep them safe.

But, as people do in times of real danger, our way of doing it is to bury our treasure.

**230.**

TYRANTS OF THE MIND.—In our time, if someone showed one single moral trait as completely as the characters drawn by the Greek writer Theophrastus and the French playwright Molière do, people would think he was sick. They would say he had "a fixed idea," an obsession. If we could visit Athens in the third century, it would seem to us to be full of fools. Today, a democracy of ideas rules inside every head. There, the crowd of ideas as a group is the master. Any single idea that tries to become master is now called, as I said, "a fixed idea." This is our way of killing tyrants: we hint that they belong in the madhouse.

**231.**

A VERY DANGEROUS EMIGRATION.—In Russia, the clever, educated people are leaving the country. People cross the border so that they can read and write good books. But by doing this, they are helping to turn their country, now left behind by the thinking minds, into a huge, wide-open Asian mouth that would love to swallow our little Europe.

**232.**

POLITICAL FOOLS.—When the Greeks got rid of their kings, they took the almost religious love they had felt for the king and gave it to the city-state, the polis. An idea can be loved more than a person, and it does not get in the lover's way as often as a beloved human being does. (For the more people know they are loved, the less thoughtful they usually become, until they no longer deserve love, and a real split

opens up.) That is why the respect for the State and the city was greater than the respect for princes had ever been. The Greeks are the political fools of ancient history. Today, other nations proudly claim that title.

**233.**

AGAINST NEGLECTING THE EYES.—Could we not find that the educated classes in England, who read the Times newspaper, lose some of their eyesight every ten years?

**234.**

GREAT WORKS AND GREAT FAITH.—One man produced great works, but his friend had great faith in these works. The two could not be separated, but clearly the first man depended completely on the second.

**235.**

THE SOCIABLE MAN.—Someone explained why he loved being around other people. "I don't get along well with myself," he said. "Society has a stronger stomach than I do, so it can put up with me."

**236.**

CLOSING THE MIND'S EYES.—Even if we are trained and used to thinking about what we do, we still have to close our inner eye while we are actually doing something, even if it is only writing letters, eating, or drinking. Even when talking with ordinary people, we have to know how to dim our own mental sight, so that we can reach and understand ordinary thinking. This closing of the eyes is something we do on purpose, and we can do it through the will.

**237.**

THE MOST TERRIBLE REVENGE.—If we want to take complete revenge on an opponent, we have to wait until our hand is full of truths and fair judgments, and then we can calmly use all of them against him. So taking revenge can become the same thing as practicing fairness. It is the most terrible kind of revenge, because there is no higher court to appeal to. This is how Voltaire took revenge on the writer Piron, with five lines that sum up Piron's whole life, work, and character: every word of them is true. In the same way, he took revenge on Frederick the Great in a letter he wrote to him from his home at Ferney.

**238.**

THE TAX OF LUXURY.—In shops we buy the most necessary and urgent things, and we have to pay a lot for them. That is because we are also paying for other things the shop sells, things it could sell cheaply but that rarely find a buyer: luxury goods that are there for pleasure. In this way, luxury puts a constant tax on the person who lives simply and goes without luxuries.

**239.**

WHY BEGGARS ARE STILL ALIVE.—If people only gave money to beggars out of compassion, the whole tribe of beggars would have starved to death long ago.

**240.**

WHY BEGGARS ARE STILL ALIVE.—The biggest giver to beggars is cowardice.

**241.**

HOW THE THINKER USES A CONVERSATION.—We don't have to spy on people to hear a great deal. We just need to watch closely, and now and then be able to forget about ourselves for a while. But most people don't know how to get anything out of a conversation. They pay far too much attention to what *they* want to say and how *they* want to answer. The real listener, on the other hand, is often happy to give a quick, temporary answer, saying something just to keep things polite, like a small payment made to stay on good terms. Meanwhile, his memory lies hidden and waiting, like someone in an ambush, and he carries home everything the other person said, along with the way they sounded and the gestures they made while speaking.—In an ordinary conversation, everyone thinks *he* is the one leading. It is like two ships sailing side by side, bumping into each other a little here and there, and each one is completely sure that the other ship is following it, or is even being pulled along by it.

**242.**

THE ART OF APOLOGIZING.—When someone apologizes to us, they have to explain themselves very well. If they don't, we easily start to feel that we are the ones who did something wrong, and that gives us an uncomfortable feeling.

**243.**

COMPANY THAT CAN'T WORK.—The ship of your thoughts sits too deep in the water. You can't sail it in the shallow waters of these friendly, well-mannered, helpful people. There are too many shallow spots and sandbanks. You would have to keep zigzagging and turning, and you would always find yourself not knowing what to do. And

soon they would be confused too, puzzled about why *you* seem so confused, because they can't guess the reason.

**244.**

THE FOXIEST FOX.—A real fox doesn't just say that the grapes he can't reach are sour. He also says the grapes he did reach, and grabbed away from others, are sour.

**245.**

IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS.—No matter how closely people are tied to each other, the view they share still stretches in all four directions, north, south, east and west. In other words, they are still looking different ways. And now and then they notice this.

**246.**

THE SILENCE OF DISGUST.—Look! Someone goes through a deep and painful change, both as a thinker and as a person, and openly tells everyone about it. And the people who hear him notice nothing, and still think he is the same as he was before! This happens all the time, and it has already disgusted many writers. They had believed people were much smarter and more understanding than they really are, and once they realized their mistake, they promised themselves to stay silent.

**247.**

WORK AS SERIOUS BUSINESS.—For many rich and important people, their work is how they take a break from long stretches of the free time they are used to. At work they become just as serious and passionate as other people become in their rare moments of free time and fun.

**248.**

THE EYE'S DOUBLE MEANING.—Sometimes a sudden ripple, like fish scales, runs across the water at your feet. In the same way, sudden flickers of uncertainty and double meaning pass across the human eye. They make us ask: is that a shudder, or a smile, or both?

**249.**

FOR AND AGAINST.—This thinker needs nobody to prove him wrong. He is perfectly able to do that himself.

**250.**

THE REVENGE OF THE EMPTY NETS.—Above all, we should watch out for people who carry the bitter feeling of a fisherman who works hard all day and comes home in the evening with empty nets.

**251.**

NOT STANDING UP FOR OUR RIGHTS.—Using power is hard work and takes courage. That is why so many people do not stand up for even their most rightful claims. Their rights are a kind of power, and they are too lazy or too scared to use them. These faults get covered up with the names of virtues: we call them "being easygoing" and "being patient."

**252.**

BRINGERS OF LIGHT.—In polite society there would be no sunshine at all if the born flatterers did not bring some in with them. By flatterers I mean the people we call "pleasant" and "charming."

**253.**

WHEN WE ARE KINDEST.—A man is at his kindest when he has just been greatly honored and has had a little something to eat.

**254.**

TOWARD THE LIGHT.—People push forward toward the light not so they can see better, but so they can shine better. And when someone lets us shine in front of him, we are happy to call that person a shining light.

**255.**

THE WORRIER.—The worrier, the person always fretting about himself, is someone with just enough brains, and just enough enjoyment of using them, to take his sorrows, his losses, and his mistakes seriously. But the field he grazes on is too small. Like an animal in a tiny pasture, he chews the grass down so short that in the end he has to hunt for single blades. So in the end he becomes jealous and greedy, and only then does he become unbearable.

**256.**

PAYING BACK.—The Greek poet Hesiod advises us that, as soon as we are able, we should pay back a neighbor who has helped us with a fair amount, and if possible with more than we got. That is where the neighbor's pleasure comes in, because his earlier kindness now earns him interest, like money in a bank. And the one who pays back also gets pleasure from it. By giving a little more than he received, he makes up for the small embarrassment of having had to ask for help in the first place.

**257.**

SHARPER THAN NEEDED.—We are far better at noticing how much other people see our weaknesses than we are at noticing other people's weaknesses. So the first kind of noticing is sharper than it needs to be.

**258.**

A KIND OF BRIGHT SHADOW.—Right next to the dark, night-like kind of person, we almost always find a bright, cheerful soul, as if the two were tied together. This bright soul is, so to speak, the reverse shadow that the dark person casts.

**259.**

NOT TAKING REVENGE.—There are so many sly kinds of revenge that a person who has a reason to take revenge can really do whatever he likes, or do nothing at all. Either way, after a while the whole world will agree that he really has taken his revenge. So it is hardly in a person's power to avoid revenge. He must not even say that he does not want revenge, because looking down on revenge is understood and felt as a lofty and refined kind of revenge in itself. So the lesson is: we should not do anything more than we need to.

**260.**

THE MISTAKE OF THOSE WHO PAY TRIBUTE.—Everyone thinks he is paying a thinker a lovely compliment when he says that he himself came up with exactly the same idea, and even put it in the same words. But the thinker is rarely happy to hear this. In fact, it often makes him start to doubt his own thoughts and his way of putting them. He quietly decides to rework both of them some day. If we want to honor someone, we should be careful not to say that we agree

with him, because that puts us on the same level as him. Often it is simply good manners to listen to an opinion as if it were not our own, or even as if it went beyond anything we could see from where we stand. For example, we should do this when an old man now and then opens up the storeroom of the knowledge he has gathered over his life.

**261.**

LETTERS.—A letter is a visit that shows up without warning, and the mailman is the go-between who delivers rude surprises. Every week we should set aside one hour for receiving letters, and afterward go and take a bath.

**262.**

BIASED.—Someone said: "Ever since I was a child, I have been biased against myself. That is why I find some truth in every criticism and something silly in every bit of praise. I usually think too little of praise and too much of blame."

**263.**

THE ROAD TO EQUALITY.—After a few hours of climbing a mountain, a scoundrel and a saint become pretty much the same kind of creature. Being worn out is the shortest road to equality and brotherhood, and in the end freedom is handed out by sleep.

**264.**

SLANDER.—If we start tracking down where a truly shocking lie about us came from, we will rarely find that it started with our honest and open enemies. If they made up something like that about us, nobody would believe them, because they are our enemies. Instead, it

is the people we were most useful to for a while, but who, for some reason, secretly feel sure they will get nothing more out of us. Those are the people who are able to get the slander rolling, like a snowball down a hill. People believe them, first, because everyone assumes they would not make up anything that could hurt themselves, and second, because they have come to know us closely. As a comfort, the much-slandered person can tell himself: "Slanders are other people's diseases that break out on your body. They show that society is a single living body, in a moral sense. That means you can prescribe a cure for yourself that will, in the end, help others too."

**265.**

THE CHILD'S KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.—The happiness of a child is just as much a myth as the happiness of the Hyperboreans, the far-off people the Greeks told legends about. The Greeks believed that if happiness lives anywhere on earth at all, it must surely live as far away from us as possible, perhaps out there at the edge of the world. Old people think the same way. If humans can be happy at all, they think, it must be as far away as possible from our own age, out at the borders and beginnings of life. For many a person, seeing children through the haze of this myth is the greatest happiness he can feel. He steps into the front courtyard of heaven himself when he says, "Let the little children come to me, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them." The myth of the child's kingdom of heaven holds true, in one way or another, wherever there is any sentimentality in the modern world.

**266.**

THE IMPATIENT ONES.—It is exactly the person who is still growing who does not want things that are still growing. He is too impatient for that. A young person will not wait until his picture of people and

things is complete, which only happens after long study, suffering, and going without. So he confidently takes up another picture that is already lying close at hand and that people recommend to him. He puts all his faith in it, as if it must give him, right away, the lines and colors for his own painting. He hugs a philosopher or a poet to his heart, and from then on he has to do long stretches of forced labor and give up his own self. He learns a lot along the way, but he often forgets the thing most worth learning and knowing—his own self. All his life he stays a follower of someone else's side. Oh, you have to do a huge amount of dull work before you find your own colors, your own brush, your own canvas! Even then you are still very far from being a master in the art of living, but at least you are the boss in your own workshop.

**267.**

THERE ARE NO TEACHERS.—As thinkers, we should only talk about teaching ourselves. When others teach the young, it is one of two things. Either it is an experiment done on something that is still unknown and cannot be known, or else it is a process of flattening everyone out, so that the new member of society fits in with the customs and manners that happen to be in fashion at the time. In both cases the result is not worthy of a thinker. It is the handiwork of parents and teachers, whom one bravely honest person(25) called "our natural enemies." One day, long after the world thinks our education is finished, we discover ourselves. That is when the thinker's life's mission begins, and that is the time to call on him for help—not as a teacher, but as someone who taught himself and has experience.

**268.**

FEELING FOR THE YOUNG.—We feel sorry when we hear that someone who is still young is losing his teeth or going blind. If we

knew all the hopeless feelings that can never be undone, hidden deep in his whole being, how great our sorrow would be! Why do we actually suffer over this? Because the young have to carry on the work we have started, and every weak spot or failing in their strength is likely to harm our work, which will pass into their hands. It is sorrow that our chance of living on after death is not well guaranteed. Or, if we only think of ourselves as people carrying out humanity's mission, it is sorrow that this mission must pass into hands weaker than ours.

**269.**

THE STAGES OF LIFE.—Comparing the four stages of life with the four seasons of the year is a very old and respected piece of foolishness. Neither the first twenty years nor the last twenty years of a life match a season of the year—unless we are happy just comparing white hair to snow and making other color matches like that. The first twenty years are a preparation for life in general, for the whole year of life, like one long New Year's Day. The last twenty years look back over everything we have lived through, take it in, and bring it all together into harmony—just as we do, in a small way, every New Year's Eve with the whole year that has passed. But in between there really is a stretch of time that does suggest a comparison with the seasons. That is the time from age twenty to age fifty. (Here I am talking about decades in rough blocks; of course everyone has to fine-tune these rough outlines for himself.) Those three decades match three seasons—summer, spring, and autumn. Human life has no winter, unless we want to call the periods of illness the winters of a person. Those periods, sadly, often come in between, and they are hard, cold, lonely, hopeless, and fruitless. The twenties are hot, heavy, stormy, rushing, exhausting years. In them we praise the day only in the evening, once it is over, as we wipe the sweat from our foreheads. They are years when work seems cruel to us, but necessary. These

twenties are the summer of life. The thirties, on the other hand, are life's springtime. The air is sometimes too warm and sometimes too cold, always restless and exciting. There is sap bubbling up, leaves bursting out, the scent of buds everywhere, many lovely mornings and evenings, and work that the birds' singing wakes us up to. It is work that truly comes from the heart, a kind of joy in our own strength, made stronger by the taste of hopeful looking forward. Last come the forties. They are mysterious, like everything that stands still. They are like a high, wide plateau with a fresh breeze blowing across it and a clear, cloudless sky above, which keeps the same gentle look all day and half the night. It is the time of harvest and warm-hearted cheer—that is the autumn of life.

**270.**

WOMEN'S INTELLIGENCE IN MODERN SOCIETY.—You can guess what women today think about men's intelligence from one fact. When they make themselves look nice, they think about anything except bringing out the intelligent look of their faces or any single feature that shows intelligence. On the contrary, they hide those features. For example, by arranging their hair over their forehead, they know how to make themselves look full of lively, eager desire for pleasure and for physical things—even when they have only a little of those qualities. They are so convinced that intelligence in a woman scares men off that they will even happily deny how sharp their most intelligent sense is, and they deliberately try to be thought short-sighted. They believe this will make men trust them more. It is as if a soft, attractive twilight were spreading around them.

**271.**

GREAT AND SHORT-LIVED.—What brings an onlooker to tears is the look of overjoyed happiness with which a lovely young bride gazes

at her husband. When we think of how great human happiness is, and how quickly it passes, we feel all the sadness of autumn.

**272.**

SENSE AND SACRIFICE.—Many a woman has a gift for sacrifice,(26) and she stops enjoying life when her husband refuses to sacrifice her. For all her cleverness, she no longer knows where to turn. And without noticing it, she changes from being the victim who is sacrificed into the priest who does the sacrificing.

**273.**

THE UNWOMANLY.—"Stupid as a man," say the women. "Cowardly as a woman," say the men. Stupidity in a woman is unwomanly.

**274.**

MALE AND FEMALE TEMPERAMENT AND DEATH RATES.—The male sex has a worse temperament than the female. This follows from the fact that more boy children die than girl children, clearly because boys "jump out of their skins" more easily—they lose control more easily. Their wildness and how hard they are to put up with soon turn everything bad in them deadly.

**275.**

THE AGE OF GIANT BUILDING.—Nothing can stop Europe from becoming more and more democratic. Even the person who wants to hold back this flood ends up using the very tools that democratic thinking first gave people, and he makes those tools easier to handle and use. The most stubborn enemies of democracy (I mean the people who want to tear everything down) seem to exist only so that the fear they cause pushes all the different parties faster and faster down the

democratic road. Now, we may well feel sorry for those who are working for this future on purpose and honestly. There is something dull and grey about their faces, and it is as if the grey dust has blown right into their brains. Still, people in the future may one day laugh at our worry. They may see the democratic work of several generations the way we see the building of stone dams and walls. It is work that is bound to cover your clothes and face with lots of dust, and maybe it can't help making the workers a little slow-witted too. But who would wish such work had never been done just because of that? It seems that Europe becoming democratic is one link in a chain of great protective ideas. These ideas are the thinking of modern times, and through them we rise up against the Middle Ages. Now, and only now, is the age of giant building! At last, solid and safe foundations, so that the future can build on them without danger! From now on, it will be impossible for the orchards of culture to be wiped out again overnight by wild, mindless floods rushing down from the mountains! Dams and walls against savages, against plagues, against slavery of the body and of the mind! At first all this is understood in a rough and literal way, but little by little in a higher and more spiritual way. In the end, all the ideas mentioned here may turn out to be the mental groundwork for the greatest artist of gardening, who can only begin his own life's mission once this other work is completely finished!—It is true that a very long time lies here between the tools and the goal. Huge, enormous effort, stretching the strength and minds of whole centuries, is needed to create or supply each single tool. So when we think about that, we should not be too hard on today's workers when they loudly announce that the wall and the fence are already the purpose and the final goal. After all, nobody can see yet the gardener and the fruit that the fence is there for.

## 276.

THE RIGHT OF EVERYONE TO VOTE.—The people did not give itself the right for everyone to vote. Wherever this right exists now, the people received it and accepted it as something temporary. In any case, the people has the right to hand the gift back if it does not live up to what they hoped for. This unhappiness with it seems to be everywhere these days. Whenever there is a vote, hardly two-thirds of the voters, maybe not even half of them, actually go to vote, and that fact alone is a vote against the whole voting system.—In fact, we have to judge this point much more harshly. A law that says the majority will decide what is good for everyone cannot rest on the ground that the law itself has created. It needs a much wider ground: that is, everyone agreeing. Voting by everyone must not only show what most people want, but what the whole country wants. So if even a very small group disagrees, that is already enough to throw the system out as unworkable. And not voting is exactly this kind of disagreement, which wrecks the whole arrangement. The "absolute veto" of each single person, or, not to be too fussy, the veto of a few thousand people, hangs over the system as what justice demands. Each time the system is used, it must first prove, depending on how the votes split, that it still has the right to exist.

## 277.

WRONG CONCLUSIONS.—What wrong conclusions we draw in areas where we don't feel at home, even those of us who, as scientists, are used to drawing right conclusions! It is embarrassing! Now it is clear that in the great rush and chaos of worldly business, in politics, and in all the sudden and urgent matters that almost every day brings, these wrong conclusions have to be what decides things. For nobody feels at home with new things that popped up overnight. All political

work, even by great statesmen, is making it up on the spot and trusting to luck.

**278.**

STARTING POINTS OF THE MACHINE AGE.—The printing press, the machine, the railway, and the telegraph are starting points. No one has yet dared to work out the results they will lead to over the next thousand years.

**279.**

A BRAKE ON CULTURE.—Suppose we are told about two places. In one place, men have no time for useful work, because army drills and parades fill their days, and the rest of the people must feed and clothe them. Their uniforms, though, are eye-catching, often colorful and full of silly things. In the other place, only a few outstanding qualities are valued, and people are more alike than anywhere else, or at least are treated as equals. Yet obedience is demanded and given without any reasons, because men give orders and make no effort to persuade. In this place punishments are few, but those few are cruel and tend to be the final and most terrible kind. There, treason counts as the worst crime, and only the boldest people dare even to point out what is wrong. There, too, human life is cheap, and ambition often means putting your life in danger. When we hear all this, we say right away: "This is a picture of a savage society that stands on shaky ground." One person may add: "It is a portrait of Sparta." But another person will start to think, and will say that this describes our modern army system. It exists in the middle of our completely different culture and society. It is something living that belongs to another time. It is, as we said, the picture of a community standing on shaky ground. It is work left behind by the past, after its death, and it can only act as a brake on the wheels of the present.—And yet sometimes even a brake on

culture is truly necessary. That is, when culture is rushing too fast downhill, or (as maybe in this case) uphill.

**280.**

MORE RESPECT FOR THE EXPERTS.—When makers compete to produce and sell things, the public is made the judge of what they make. But the public has no special knowledge, so it judges goods by how they look. Because of this, the skill of making things look good (and maybe the public's taste for that) is bound to grow when competition rules, while the real quality of every product is bound to get worse. The result will be—as long as people don't stop valuing good sense—that one day this kind of competition will be ended, and a new rule will win out. Only a master of the craft should give a verdict on the work, and the public should rely on trusting the judge as a person and trusting his honesty. So: no work without a name on it! At the very least, an expert should stand behind it and put his own name to it as a guarantee, if the maker's name is missing or unknown. For someone who isn't an expert, a low price is just another kind of illusion and trick, because only how long a thing lasts can show whether it is really cheap, and how cheap. But judging how long something will last is hard, and for someone who isn't an expert it's impossible. —So right now, whatever catches the eye and costs little gets ahead—and naturally, that means things made by machines. On top of that, machines—meaning the thing that makes production as fast and easy as possible—favour the kind of goods that sell best. If they didn't, they would bring no real profit; they would be used too little and sit idle too often. But as said before, it is the public that decides what sells best: it has to be whatever is easiest to trade—in other words, the thing that looks good and also looks cheap. So in the world of work, too, our motto must hold true: "More respect for the experts!"

## 281.

THE DANGER FACING KINGS.—Democracy has the power, without using any violence, and only through steady pressure within the law, to empty out kings and emperors until nothing but a zero is left. Maybe it would be a zero with the meaning every zero has: worth nothing by itself, but if you put it on the right side of a number, it makes that number ten times bigger. Kings and emperors would then be a splendid decoration on the simple, fitting clothes of democracy. They would be a beautiful extra that democracy allows itself, a leftover from all the old, honoured ornaments of history—in fact, a symbol of history itself. And in this one-of-a-kind position they would be very useful, as long as, as said before, they don't stand alone but are placed on the right side.—To avoid the danger of being turned into nothing, kings cling with their teeth to their role as war leaders. For this they need wars, or in other words, unusual times, when that slow, lawful pressure from the forces of democracy lets up.

## 282.

THE TEACHER IS A NECESSARY EVIL.—Let's have as few people as possible standing between the creative minds and the minds that are hungry to take things in! The people in the middle water down, almost without noticing, the food they pass along. For their work as go-betweens they want too big a payment for themselves, and this payment is taken from the original, creative minds—that is, people's interest, admiration, free time, money, and other benefits.—So we should always see the teacher as a necessary evil, just like the shopkeeper; an evil we should keep as small as possible.—Maybe the hardship that is so common in Germany comes mainly from the fact that too many people want to live, and live well, from trading (in other words, they want to push prices as low as possible for the maker and as high as possible for the buyer, and so make a profit from the

biggest possible loss to both). In the same way, we can surely trace a main cause of the widespread poverty of the mind to there being far too many teachers. It is because of teachers that so little is learned, and learned so badly.

**283.**

THE TAX OF RESPECT.—When someone we know and respect does or makes something for us, whether he is a doctor, an artist, or a craftsman, we are glad to pay him as much as we can. Often we pay him more than we can really afford. On the other hand, we pay a stranger as little as possible. Here it becomes a fight, where everyone struggles, and makes others struggle, over every inch of ground. In the work of someone we know, there is something that money cannot buy: the feeling and the cleverness he put into the work just for us. We think the best way to show how thankful we feel is to make a kind of sacrifice ourselves.—The heaviest tax of all is the tax of respect. But the more competition takes over, and the more we buy from strangers and work for strangers, the smaller this tax becomes. And yet this tax is really the measure of how high and noble the dealings between human minds and hearts can be.

**284.**

THE WAY TO REAL PEACE.—These days, no government will admit that it keeps an army so that it can now and then satisfy its hunger for conquest. Instead, it says the army is there only for defense. The government calls on the moral idea that self-defense is right, and uses it like a lawyer to argue its case. But this means keeping morality for ourselves and putting immorality on our neighbor. After all, if our country has to think about ways to defend itself, then the neighbor must be imagined as eager to attack and conquer.—At the same time, the neighbor also denies any wish to attack, just as our country does,

and he too claims to keep his army only for defense. So when we explain why we need an army, we are calling him a liar and a sly criminal, someone who would love to catch a harmless, unsuspecting victim by surprise and grab it without a fight. This is how all countries face each other today. Each one assumes the worst about its neighbor and the best about itself. But this assumption is an inhuman idea, just as bad as war, and even worse. In fact, deep down it is a challenge and a reason for war, because it accuses the neighboring country of being immoral, and that stirs up hostile plans and actions. The idea that an army is just for self-defense must be given up as completely as the hunger for conquest. Maybe a day worth remembering will come. On that day, a nation famous for its wars and victories, known for having the most advanced military order and skill, and used to making the biggest sacrifices for these things, will cry out of its own free will, "We will break our swords!" And it will tear down its whole military system, every last bit of it. To make ourselves defenseless, after having been the best defended of all, out of a noble and generous feeling: that is the way to real peace. Real peace must always rest on a peaceful frame of mind. The so-called "armed peace" that exists in every country today is a sign of a warlike frame of mind. It is a mind that trusts neither itself nor its neighbor, and that refuses to put down its weapons, partly out of hate and partly out of fear. Better to be destroyed than to hate and fear, and twice as much better to be destroyed than to make yourself hated and feared. Someday this must become the highest rule of every nation!—As everyone knows, our liberal members of parliament do not have time to think about human nature. If they did, they would know they are wasting their effort when they work toward "slowly reducing the cost of the military." On the contrary, it is when the pain of these costs is at its worst that the only kind of god who can help here will be closest. The tree of military glory can only be destroyed all at once, with a single bolt of

lightning. But, as you know, lightning comes from the clouds, from above.

**285.**

CAN OWNING PROPERTY EVER BE MADE FAIR?—When people strongly feel that property is unjust (and the hand of history's great clock has come round to that point once again), we come up with two ways to fix the unfairness. One way is to share everything out equally. The other is to get rid of private ownership and go back to the State owning everything. The second way is especially close to the hearts of our Socialists. They are angry with that ancient Jew who said, "You shall not steal." In their view, the eighth commandment should really say, "You shall not own anything."—The first way, sharing equally, was tried many times in ancient times. It was always done on a small scale, and even so it did not work well. We can learn from that failure too. "Give everyone an equal plot of land" is easy to say. But think how much bitterness comes from the dividing up and splitting apart that it requires, from losing things a family has owned for ages. Think how much deep respect and loyalty gets hurt and thrown away! When we pull up the stones that mark where one person's land ends and another's begins, we pull up the very foundation of morality. Then, think how much new bitterness there would be among the new owners, how much envy and sideways glaring! There have never been two plots of land that were truly equal. And even if there were, people's envy of their neighbours would stop them from believing the plots were equal. And how long would this equality last, when it is sick and poisoned right at its roots? In a few generations, through inheritance, one plot here would be split among five owners, and over there five plots would belong to one person. Suppose people accepted strict inheritance laws to prevent these problems. Then the same equal plots would still exist. But there would also be poor, unhappy people who

owned nothing except their dislike of their relatives and neighbours, and who longed for everything to be turned upside down.—Now take the second way. Suppose we give ownership back to the community and make each person only a temporary tenant. Then we damage farming. That is because people dislike anything they only hold for a short time, something they have not poured their own care and sacrifice into. With that kind of property, a person acts like a pirate, either robbing it or wasting it like a good-for-nothing. Plato says that if property were abolished, selfishness would disappear. We can answer him this way: if selfishness were taken away, people would no longer have the four main virtues either. In the same way, we have to say that even the deadliest plague could not harm humanity as terribly as it would be harmed if vanity one day disappeared. Without vanity and selfishness, what would human virtues be? By this I do not at all mean that these virtues are just different names and masks for those two qualities. Plato's dream of a perfect society, which Socialists are still singing like a song's chorus, is based on a poor understanding of people. He did not have the historical study of moral feelings. He did not understand where the good and useful traits of the human soul come from. Like everyone in ancient times, he believed in good and evil as if they were black and white. That is, he believed there was a total difference between good people and bad people, and between good qualities and bad ones.—So that property can from now on be trusted more and become more moral, we should keep every path of work open for people to build small fortunes. But we should stop people from getting rich suddenly and without effort. So we should take all the areas of transport and trade that help people pile up huge fortunes—especially the money market—out of the hands of private individuals and private companies. And we should see people who own too much, just like people who own nothing, as types that are a danger to the community.

## 286.

WHAT WORK IS WORTH.—Suppose we try to decide what a piece of work is worth by looking at how much time went into it, how much hard effort, good or bad will, pressure, cleverness or laziness, honesty or pretending. Then our judgement can never be fair. That is because we would have to put the worker's whole personality on the scales, and that is impossible. Here the rule is, "Do not judge!" And yet the cry for fairness is exactly the cry we now hear from people who are unhappy with how work is valued today. If we think about it further, we see that no person is truly responsible for what they produce, that is, their work. So no one can earn credit from it. Every piece of work is as good or as bad as it has to be, because of the way strengths and weaknesses, abilities and wishes are necessarily linked together in a chain. The worker is not free to choose whether to work or not, or to decide how to work. The only thing that has set the value of work is usefulness, seen from a wider or narrower point of view. What we now call fairness works very well in this area as a very refined kind of usefulness. It does not just think about the present moment and grab the opportunity in front of it. It looks at keeping all conditions stable over time. So it also keeps in mind the well-being of the worker, his health and his peace of mind. It does this so that he and his children may work well for our children, and become people we can rely on for longer than one human lifetime. Taking advantage of workers, as we now understand, was foolish. It was robbery from the future and it put society in danger. We are almost at war now. And in any case, from now on it will cost a great deal to keep the peace, to make agreements, and to win back trust, because those who took advantage of workers were very foolish for a very long time.

## 287.

ON STUDYING SOCIETY AS A WHOLE.—The biggest problem for anyone today in Europe, and especially in Germany, who studies economics and politics is this: the real conditions around them do not show the normal rules. Instead they show exceptions, or stages where things are changing or dying out. So we have to learn to look past the conditions that exist right in front of us. For example, we can turn our eyes to faraway North America. There, if we want, we can still watch and study how society moves in its early and normal way. In Germany, studying this requires hard historical research, or, as I have suggested, a telescope.

## 288.

HOW MACHINES MAKE US SMALLER.—Machines have no personality. They take away the pride of a piece of work, and the personal strengths and flaws that stick to all work not made by a machine. In other words, they take away its little bit of humanity. In the past, buying from craftsmen was a way of honouring them as people, since you surrounded yourself with things they had made. So furniture and clothes became signs that people valued each other and had a personal connection. Today, by contrast, we seem to live in a kind of slavery where no one has a name or a face.—We must not pay too high a price for making work easier.

## 289.

A QUARANTINE THAT HAS LASTED CENTURIES.—Democratic systems are like quarantine centres that protect us from the old disease of wanting to rule over others like a tyrant. As such, they are extremely useful and extremely boring.

**290.**

THE MOST DANGEROUS PARTY MEMBER.—The most dangerous member of a party is the one whose leaving would bring down the whole party. In other words, the best party member.

**291.**

Fate and the Stomach. A slice of bread and butter more or less in a jockey's belly can sometimes decide a race and the bets on it. And so it can decide the good or bad luck of thousands of people. In the same way, as long as the fate of nations depends on diplomats, people who love their country will always worry about what is going on in the diplomats' stomachs. "How much longer...?"

**292.**

The Victory of Democracy. These days, every political power tries to use people's fear of Socialism to make itself stronger. But in the long run only democracy really wins from this. That is because all parties now have to flatter "the masses," the ordinary people, and give them all kinds of benefits and freedoms. In the end, the masses become all-powerful. Yet the masses are about as far as you can get from Socialism, if Socialism means a plan to change the way people get and own property. Once they get their hands on the steering wheel, through big majorities in their parliaments, they will go after the whole ruling system of capitalists, merchants, and bankers with taxes that rise as wealth rises. In fact, they will slowly create a middle class. That middle class may forget Socialism the way you forget a disease you have recovered from. The practical result of this growing democracy will next be a league of European nations. In it, each separate nation, marked off by sensible natural borders, will be like a canton, a self-governing region with its own rights. Little attention will be paid to

the historical memories of the nations that existed before. That is because the loving, almost religious attachment to those memories will slowly be pulled up by the roots under democratic rule, with its crazy love of new things and experiments. Whatever changes to borders turn out to be needed will be made to serve the interests of the big cantons and of the whole federation at the same time, but not to honor any old, respected memories. Working out the right basis for these border changes will be the job of future diplomats. These diplomats will have to be experts in civilization, in farming, and in trade, all at once. They will have no armies behind them, only reasons and practical benefits. Only then will foreign policy and home policy be tied together so they can't be pulled apart. Today it is different: home policy follows foreign policy like a servant following a proud master, and picks up, in shabby baskets, the leftover stalks from the harvest that foreign policy has already gathered.

**293.**

The Goal and the Means of Democracy. Democracy tries to create and protect independence for as many people as possible: independence in their opinions, in their way of life, and in their work. To do this, democracy has to deny the vote to two groups: those who own nothing, and those who are truly rich. These are the two kinds of people it cannot put up with. It must always work to get rid of these two groups, because they keep putting its whole mission in doubt. In the same way, democracy must block every move that seems aimed at organizing political parties. The three great enemies of independence, in all three of those senses, are the have-nots, the rich, and the parties. I am talking about democracy as something still to come. What goes by that name today is different from older kinds of government only in one way: it drives with new horses, but the roads and the wheels are

the same as in the old days. So, with these vehicles of the state, has the danger really become any smaller?

**294.**

Good Judgment and Success. Good judgment, that is, careful wisdom, is a great quality. Deep down it is the highest virtue of all, the mother and queen of all the other virtues. And yet in everyday life it is far from always successful. Someone who courted this virtue only to win success would find himself let down. That is because practical people see it as suspicious. They mix it up with slyness and fakeness. Meanwhile, the man who clearly lacks good judgment, who grabs at things quickly and sometimes misses, has people's bias in his favor. They think he is an honest fellow you can trust. So practical people do not like the careful, wise man; they think he is a danger to them. Also, we often assume the wise man is nervous, distracted, and fussy about details. Impractical people, flitting about like butterflies, find him uncomfortable to be around, because he does not live in their carefree way, without thinking about his actions and duties. Among them he seems like their conscience walking around in a body, and when he looks at them, their bright day seems to grow dim. So when success and popularity pass him by, he can often tell himself, as a private comfort: "These are the high taxes you have to pay for owning the most precious thing a human can have. Still, it is worth the price!"

**295.**

"I Too Was in Paradise." I looked down over rolling waves of hills to a lake the color of milky green. I looked through fir and pine trees that were stern and serious with age. All around me were rocky cliffs of every shape, and the ground was bright with flowers and grass. A herd of cattle moved in front of me, stretching out and spreading over the land. Some single cows and groups were far off, in the clearest

evening light, close to the pine forest. Others were nearer and darker. All of them were calm and content in the evening. My watch said half past six. The bull of the herd had stepped into the white, foaming stream. He moved forward slowly, sometimes pushing against the wild current, sometimes giving in to it. No doubt that was his own kind of fierce fun. Two dark-skinned, brown-faced people from the area around Bergamo were looking after the herd; the girl was dressed almost like a boy. On the left were cliffs hanging out over the land and fields of snow, above wide bands of forest. On the right, high above me, were two huge ice-covered peaks, shimmering behind a veil of sunny haze. Everything was big, silent, and bright. The beauty of it all filled me with awe and made me silently worship that moment and what it showed me. Without thinking, as if nothing could be more natural, you filled this pure, clear world of light with Greek heroes. This world had no trace of longing, of waiting, of looking ahead or looking back. You felt it all the way the painter Poussin and his followers felt things: heroic and peaceful at the same time. Some individual people have lived like that too, always feeling themselves inside the world and the world inside themselves. One of the greatest of them was the man who invented a heroic yet peaceful kind of philosophy: Epicurus.

**296.**

Counting and Measuring. The skill of seeing many things at once, of weighing them against each other, of adding one thing to another and quickly reaching a conclusion, a total that is fairly correct: that is what makes a great politician, a great general, or a great businessman. This quality is really a talent for fast calculation in your head. The skill of seeing only one thing, and finding in it the single reason for acting, the rule that guides every other action: that is what makes a hero, and

also a fanatic. This quality is a knack for measuring everything with just one scale.

**297.**

Don't Look Too Soon. While we are going through some experience, we have to give ourselves over to it completely and close our eyes. In other words, we should not start watching ourselves while it is happening. Watching would upset our good digestion of the experience. Instead of wisdom, all we would get is indigestion.

**298.**

WHAT WISE PEOPLE DO. To become wise, we have to choose, on purpose, to go through certain experiences. That means jumping right into their open jaws. It's true that this is very dangerous. Plenty of so-called "wise men" have been eaten alive along the way.

**299.**

A TIRED MIND. Sometimes we act cold and uncaring toward people, and others blame this on a hard heart or a flaw in our character. But often it's only that our mind is worn out. When we're in that state, other people seem as dull and unimportant to us as we seem to ourselves.

**300.**

"THE ONE THING WE REALLY NEED." If we are smart, the one thing we need is to have joy in our hearts. "Ah," someone adds, "if we are smart, the best thing we can do is to be wise."

**301.**

A SIGN OF LOVE. Someone once said, "There are two people I have never thought about deeply. That shows how much I love them."

**302.**

HOW WE TRY TO FIX BAD ARGUMENTS. Many people throw a bit of their own personality into their weak arguments, as if that would make them work better and turn them into straight, solid ones. It's like bowlers who, after the ball has already left their hand, still twist their bodies and wave their arms to try to steer it.

**303.**

HONESTY. It doesn't mean much to be a model citizen when it comes to rules and other people's property. Take some small examples, which actually show this kind of good behavior better than big ones do: as a boy, you never stole fruit from someone else's orchard, and as a grown man, you never walked across a field of uncut grass. That is very little. It only makes you a "law-abiding person," with just the amount of goodness that a "society," a group of people, is able to have.

**304.**

"MAN!" How small is the vanity of even the vainest person, compared to the vanity that even the humblest person feels when he thinks about his place in nature and in the world as "Man!"

**305.**

THE MOST NEEDED EXERCISE. If we lack self-control in little things, we slowly come to lack it in big moments too. Every day on which we haven't said no to ourselves at least once, about some small

thing, is a wasted day and puts the next day in danger. This kind of exercise is a must if we want to keep the joy of being our own boss.

**306.**

LOSING OURSELVES. Once we have found ourselves, we have to learn how, now and then, to lose ourselves and then find ourselves again. This is true if we are thinkers. For a thinker, it's a disadvantage to always be tied to one single person.

**307.**

WHEN WE NEED TO STEP AWAY. If you want to understand and judge something, you have to step away from it, at least for a while. Only after you've left a city can you see how high its towers rise above its houses.

**308.**

THE MIDDAY OF LIFE. Some people are given a busy, stormy morning of life. When they reach the midday of life, a strange longing takes over their soul: a longing for rest that could last for months or even years. Everything around them goes quiet. Voices sound farther and farther away. The sun shines straight down on them. In a hidden patch of grass in the woods, such a person sees the great god Pan asleep, and it seems to him that all of Nature has fallen asleep along with Pan, both with a look of forever on their faces. He wants nothing. He worries about nothing. His heart stands still; only his eyes stay alive. It is like a death with eyes wide open. In this state, a person sees many things he never saw before, and as far as his eyes can reach, everything is woven into a net of light, almost buried in it. He feels happy, but it is a heavy, very heavy kind of happiness. Then, at last, the wind starts moving in the trees. Midday is over. Life sweeps

him away again: life, which is blind, and which drags its wild crowd of followers behind it: desire, illusion, forgetting, pleasure, destruction, and decay. And so evening comes, even stormier and busier than the morning was. To a truly busy, active person, these long stretches of quiet seeing and understanding seem almost eerie and unhealthy, but not unpleasant.

**309.**

WATCH OUT FOR THE ONE WHO PAINTS YOUR PORTRAIT. Imagine a great painter who, in a portrait, has captured on canvas the fullest, deepest expression a person is capable of. When he later sees that person in real life, he will almost always feel that he's only looking at a cartoon of him.

**310.**

THE TWO RULES OF THE NEW LIFE. First rule: build your life on the most solid, real things you can touch, and not, as people have done until now, on the most far-off, vague, and cloudy foundation. Second rule: before you organize your life and aim it at some final goal, first figure out how important the closest and nearer things are, and which things are more certain and which are less.

**311.**

DANGEROUS TOUCHINESS. Talented people who are also lazy will always seem a bit annoyed when one of their friends has finished a solid piece of work. Their jealousy wakes up. They feel ashamed of their own laziness, or rather, they're afraid their hardworking friend will now look down on them even more than before. In this mood, they criticize the new work, and, to the complete shock of the person who made it, their criticism turns into revenge.

**312.**

SMASHING ILLUSIONS. Illusions are certainly costly entertainment. But smashing illusions costs even more, if you treat it as entertainment, as some people clearly do.

**313.**

THE DULL SAMENESS OF THE "WISE MAN." Cows sometimes have a look of wonder that stops halfway before it turns into a question. But in the eyes of a higher mind, it's the opposite: the attitude of "being amazed by nothing" spreads out flat and the same everywhere, like a cloudless sky.

**314.**

DON'T STAY SICK TOO LONG. We should be careful not to stay sick for too long. The people around us grow impatient with their usual duty of showing sympathy, because it's too much work to keep up the look of that feeling for very long. Then they quickly start to doubt our character, and they decide: "You deserve to be sick, and we don't have to bother showing you sympathy anymore."

**315.**

A TIP FOR PEOPLE WHO GET CARRIED AWAY.—If you like to be swept off your feet, and you would love to be lifted up high, you must be careful not to get too heavy. For example, you must not learn too much. Above all, you must not let yourself be stuffed full of science. Science makes people heavy and slow. So watch out, you dreamers!

## 316.

KNOWING HOW TO CATCH YOURSELF BY SURPRISE.—If you want to see yourself as you really are, you must know how to catch yourself by *surprise*, with a torch in your hand. The mind works the same way as the body. Someone who is used to looking at himself in the mirror forgets how ugly he is. He only notices it again when a portrait painter shows him. But then he gets used to the painting too, and forgets his ugliness all over again.—This shows us a law that holds for everyone: people cannot stand ugliness that will never change, except for a moment. In every case they either forget it or deny it.—The students of human nature have to count on that "moment" when they want to bring out their truths.

## 317.

OPINIONS AND FISH.—We own our opinions the way we own fish. That is, we own them only in the sense that we own a fish pond. We have to go fishing and get lucky. Only then do we have *our* fish, *our* opinions. I am talking here about living opinions, living fish. Other people are happy to own a cabinet full of fossils—and, inside their heads, "firm beliefs."

## 318.

SIGNS OF FREEDOM AND SLAVERY.—Taking care of your own needs yourself, as much as you can, even if you don't do it perfectly, is the road to freedom of mind and of character. Satisfying lots of needs, even ones you don't really need, and satisfying them as completely as possible, is training for being a slave. The Greek teacher Hippias earned and made everything he had, inside and out, including all the clothes he wore. He stands for the highest freedom of mind and char-

acter. It doesn't matter if everything is done equally well and perfectly. Pride can patch up the parts that came out badly.

**319.**

BELIEVING IN YOURSELF.—Nowadays we distrust anyone who believes in himself. In the past, that alone was enough to make other people believe in you. Today the recipe for getting people to trust you goes like this: "Don't hold back on yourself! If you want your opinion to look believable, you must first set fire to your own house!"

**320.**

RICHER AND POORER AT THE SAME TIME.—I know a man who, even as a child, got into the habit of thinking highly of how intelligent people are. By that I mean he believed they truly cared about things of the mind, and that they unselfishly preferred whatever was shown to be true. But at the same time, he had a modest, even low, opinion of his own brain—his judgment, his memory, his quick thinking, his imagination. When he compared himself with others, he thought he was worth nothing. Then, as the years went by, he was forced to change this judgment, first once, and then in a hundred different ways. You would think he would have been completely pleased and delighted. And to some extent he was. But, as he once said: "Still, mixed into my feelings is a bitterness of the darkest kind, one I never knew when I was younger. Ever since I learned to judge people and myself more accurately, my mind seems less useful to me. I hardly think I can do any good with it at all now, because other people's minds can't understand the good it offers. I now always see in front of me the terrible gap between those who could help and those who need help. So I suffer from the bad luck of having my mind all to myself, and of having to enjoy it alone, as far as it gives any joy at all.

But giving is a greater blessing than owning. And what is the richest man worth when he is alone in a desert?"(28)

**321.**

HOW WE SHOULD ATTACK.—The reasons why people believe something, or don't believe it, are as strong as they could be in only very few people. Usually, to shake someone's belief, you don't need anything like your heaviest weapon. Many people get what they want just by making a lot of noise when they attack. In fact, toy guns are often enough. With very vain people, it's enough to look like you are attacking hard. They think they are being taken very seriously, and they give in easily.

**322.**

DEATH.—Because we know for sure that we will die, every life could have a precious, sweet-smelling drop of lightheartedness mixed into it. And instead, you strange souls who act like pharmacists, you have turned death into a drop of poison. It tastes nasty, and it makes the whole of life look ugly.

**323.**

REGRET.—Never let regret run free. Instead, tell yourself right away: "That would just be adding a second foolish act to the first one." If you have done something bad, you should think about doing something good. If you are punished for what you did, accept the punishment with the feeling that, just by accepting it, you are doing some good. That is because you are warning others not to make the same mistake. Every wrongdoer who is punished has the right to think of himself as someone who helps humanity.

**324.**

BECOMING A THINKER.—How can anyone become a thinker if he doesn't spend at least a third of each day away from strong feelings, other people, and books?

**325.**

THE BEST MEDICINE.—For someone who is sick, a little health now and then is the best medicine.

**326.**

HANDS OFF.—There are awful people who, instead of solving a problem, make it more tangled for everyone working on it, and make it harder to solve.(29) Anyone who doesn't know how to hit the nail right on the head should be begged not to hit the nail at all.

**327.**

FORGETTING NATURE.—We talk about Nature, and while we do, we forget ourselves. But we ourselves are Nature, *no matter what*.—So Nature is something quite different from what we feel when we hear her name spoken.

**328.**

DEEP AND DULL.—Deep people are like deep wells: it takes a long time for anything thrown into them to reach the bottom. The people watching usually don't wait long enough. So they are too quick to think such a person is cold and hard—or even boring.

**329.**

WHEN IT IS TIME TO PROMISE TO BE TRUE TO YOURSELF.—Sometimes we wander off in a direction of thinking that doesn't fit our talents. For a while we fight bravely against wind and tide—which really means we are fighting against ourselves. But in the end we get tired and out of breath. What we achieve gives us no real joy, because we feel we paid too high a price for these successes. We even lose hope in our ability to create anything, and in our future, maybe right in the middle of winning.—At last, at long last, we turn back. And then the wind fills our sails and carries us into our own calm waters. What happiness! How sure of winning we feel! Only now do we know what we are and what we want. And now we promise to be true to ourselves, and we have the right to do so—as people who know.

**330.**

WEATHER FORECASTERS.—The clouds show us which way the wind is blowing high above our heads. In the same way, the lightest and freest minds show, by the paths they take, what the weather of the future will be. The wind down in the valley, and the opinions people trade in the marketplace today, tell us nothing about the future. They only tell us about the past.

**331.**

ALWAYS SPEEDING UP.—Some people start slowly and find it hard to get to know a subject. Yet sometimes, later on, they gain the habit of always speeding up, so that in the end nobody knows where the current will carry them.

**332.**

THE THREE GOOD THINGS.—Greatness, calm, and sunlight: these three hold everything a thinker wants, and also everything he asks of himself. They cover his hopes and his duties, his claims in matters of the mind and of right and wrong, and even his everyday way of living and the scenery around his home. To match these three things, there are, first, thoughts that lift us up; second, thoughts that calm us; and third, thoughts that shed light. And, fourth, there are thoughts that have all three of these qualities at once, in which every earthly thing is changed and made glorious. This is the kingdom of the great three joys.

**333.**

DYING FOR "TRUTH."—We should not let ourselves be burned at the stake for our opinions. We are not as sure of them as all that. But we might let ourselves be burned for the right to have our opinions and to change them.

**334.**

MARKET VALUE.—If we want people to see us exactly as we are, we must be something with a market value, something with a set price. But only things in everyday use have a market value. So this wish comes either from clever modesty or from foolish pride.

**335.**

A LESSON FOR BUILDERS.—Once the house is built, we must take down the scaffolding.

**336.**

THE WAY OF SOPHOCLES.—Who ever poured more water into their wine than the Greeks did? Being sober and being graceful at the same time: that was the special privilege of the noble Athenian in the days of Sophocles and after. Copy that, anyone who can! In life and in work!

**337.**

HEROISM.—Being a hero means doing something great (or, in a noble way, choosing not to do something) without feeling that you are competing with other people or performing in front of them. Wherever the hero goes, he carries with him a wilderness, and a holy land with borders no one may cross.

**338.**

FINDING OUR "DOUBLE" IN NATURE.—In some places in the countryside we find ourselves again, and it gives us a delightful shiver. It is the nicest way of meeting our "double," our twin self. How happy must a person be who has that feeling right here! Here, in this October air where the sun always shines. Here, in this happy, fairy-like play of the wind from morning till evening. Here, in this clearest air and gentlest warmth. Here, in this whole serious yet cheerful landscape of hills, lake, and forest on this high plain, which has set up camp without fear right next to the terrors of snow that never melts. Here, where Italy and Finland seem to have joined hands, and where all of Nature's silver shades of color seem to have made their home. How happy must a person be who can say: "True, there are many grander and finer views, but this one is so familiar and close to me. It is like my own flesh and blood, and even more than that!"

**339.**

THE WISE MAN'S FRIENDLINESS.—Without even thinking about it, the wise man will be friendly and easy to talk to when he deals with other people, just as a prince would be. He will gladly treat them as his equals, no matter how different they are from him in talent, in rank, or in character. But as soon as people notice this trait, they blame him for it more harshly than for anything else.

**340.**

GOLD.—Not everything that is gold glitters. The most precious metal has a soft glow.

**341.**

WHEEL AND BRAKE.—The wheel and the brake have different jobs. But they also share one job: hurting each other.

**342.**

THINGS THAT DISTURB THE THINKER.—Anything that interrupts a thinker in the middle of his thoughts (that "disturbs" him, as people say) should be seen by him calmly. He should treat it like a new model who walks in through the door and offers to pose for the artist. Interruptions are like the ravens that brought food to the hermit in the wilderness: they feed the person who lives alone.

**343.**

BEING VERY CLEVER.—Being very clever keeps people young. But because of that very thing, they have to put up with being thought older than they are. That is because people read the marks of a sharp mind as signs of experience. They take it to mean that the person has

lived a lot and lived badly, and has known suffering, mistakes, and regret. So if we are very clever and let it show, we seem to others older and more wicked than we really are.

**344.**

HOW WE SHOULD WIN.—We should not even want to win if all we can hope for is to beat our opponent by a hair. A good victory makes the loser glad too. It must have something godlike about it, something that spares the loser from shame.

**345.**

A FALSE BELIEF OF SUPERIOR MINDS.—Superior minds find it hard to free themselves from one false belief. They imagine that ordinary people envy them and see them as exceptions. But in fact, ordinary people see them as unnecessary, as something nobody would miss if it did not exist.

**346.**

NEEDED FOR CLEANLINESS.—For some kinds of people, changing their opinions is just as much a matter of cleanliness as changing their clothes. For other kinds of people, it is only a matter of vanity.

**347.**

ALSO WORTHY OF A HERO.—Here is a hero who did nothing but shake the tree as soon as the fruit was ripe. Do you think that is too small a thing? Well, just look at the tree he shook.

**348.**

A MEASURE OF WISDOM.—You can measure exactly how much wiser someone has grown by how much less bad-tempered they have become.

**349.**

SAYING SOMETHING WRONG IN AN UNPLEASANT WAY.—Not everyone likes to hear the truth said in a pleasant way. But at least let no one believe that a mistake turns into the truth just because it is said in an unpleasant way.

**350.**

THE GOLDEN RULE.—People have been tied down with many chains, so that they would forget how to act like animals. And it worked: humans have become gentler, smarter, happier, and more thoughtful than any animal. But now they still suffer from having worn their chains for so long, from going so long without clean air and the freedom to move. These chains, as I keep saying again and again, are the heavy and important mistakes found in moral, religious, and metaphysical ideas, that is, ideas about a world beyond this one. Only when we have gotten over the sickness the chains left behind will we reach the first great goal: setting humans apart from the beasts. Right now we are in the middle of the work of taking off the chains, and while we do it we need to be extremely careful. Only a person who has become truly noble may be given freedom of the mind. Only to that person does life become lighter, and only that person has his wounds healed. He is the first who can say that he lives for the sake of joy, and for no other purpose. If anyone else said his motto, "Peace around me and goodwill toward all everyday things," it would be dangerous.—With this motto, meant for single individu-

als, he is thinking of an old saying. That saying was grand and moving, it was meant for everyone, and it has stayed standing above all humanity like a slogan and a lighthouse. But everyone who puts it on their flag too early will be destroyed by it. It is the rock that Christianity crashed against and sank. It seems it is still not time for all people to share the luck of those shepherds who saw the sky light up above them and heard the words: "Peace on earth and goodwill to one another among men."—This is still the age of the individual.

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The Shadow said: Of everything you have said, nothing pleased me more than one promise: "You want to be good neighbors to everyday things again." That will help us poor shadows too. Because, admit it, up to now you have been far too fond of insulting us.

The Wanderer answered: Insulting you? But then why did you never stand up for yourselves? After all, you were always right next to our ears.

The Shadow said: We felt we were too close to you to have the right to talk about ourselves.

The Wanderer said: How polite! Ah, I can see that you shadows are "better people" than we are.(30)

The Shadow said: And yet you called us "pushy" and annoying. Us! When there is at least one thing we know extremely well: how to keep quiet and wait. No Englishman knows it better. It is true that we very, very often walk along with people like servants in their group, but never as their slaves. When a person avoids the light, we avoid that person. So in that way, at least, we are free.

The Wanderer said: Ah, but the light avoids people much more often, and then you leave them too.

The Shadow said: It has often hurt me to leave you. I am hungry to know things, and a lot about people has stayed hidden from me, because I can't always be with them. If I could know people completely, I would gladly be your slave in exchange.

The Wanderer said: Do you know, do I know, whether you might then turn into the master instead of the slave without even meaning to? Or you might stay a slave, but live a life of shame and disgust because you looked down on your master? Let us both be happy with the kind of freedom you have had until now, you and I! Because seeing a creature that is not free would spoil my greatest joys. Even the best things would disgust me if someone was forced to share them with me. I won't stand for having any slaves around me. That is why I don't like the dog, that lazy, tail-wagging freeloader. He only became "doggish" by being a slave to people, and people still say of him that he is loyal to his master and follows him like——

The Shadow said: Like his shadow, that's what they say. Maybe I have already followed you too long today? It has been the longest day, but we are getting near the end. Be patient just a little longer! The grass is damp, and I am getting cold.

The Wanderer said: Oh, is it already time to say goodbye? And I had to hurt your feelings at the very end. I saw you turn darker.

The Shadow said: I blushed in the only color I have. I remembered that I had often lain at your feet like a dog, and that you then——

The Wanderer said: Isn't there something I can do right away to make you happy? Don't you have any wish?

The Shadow said: None, except maybe the wish that the philosopher nicknamed "the dog"(31) said to Alexander the Great: just move a little out of my light; I feel cold.

The Wanderer said: What should I do?

The Shadow said: Walk under those fir trees and look around you toward the mountains. The sun is going down.

The Wanderer called out: Where are you? Where are you?

## Footnotes

1 Word for word, the play on words would come out as "Foreword" and "forword." (Translator's note.)

2 This points to the ending of the Second Part of Goethe's play Faust: "das Ewig Weibliche Zieht uns hinan!" That means: "The Eternal Feminine draws us on!" (Translator's note.)

3 Here we have tried to copy the play on the German words "Gewissen" (conscience) and "Wissen" (knowing). (Translator's note.)

4 Compare the Gospel of John, chapter 1, verse 1. (Translator's note.)

5 Nietzsche made up the German word Mitfreude, which means sharing others' joy, as the opposite of Mitleid, which means sympathy. There is no English word for it. (Translator's note.)

6 In 356 B.C., Herostratus of Ephesus set fire to the temple of Diana. When he was tortured, he admitted he did it just to become famous. (Translator's note.)

7 This is a quote from Schiller's play Don Carlos, Act 1, Scene 5. (Translator's note.)

8 Of course, this means Jesus and Socrates. (Translator's note.)

9 She was the queen of the Amazons, the warrior women, and Achilles killed her in the Trojan War. (Translator's note.)

10 This comes from Schiller's play Wallenstein's Camp: "Wer den Besten seiner Zeit genug gethan, der hat gelebt für alle Zeiten." That means: "Whoever has satisfied the best people of his own time has lived for all time."

11 In German the word is Barockstil, meaning baroque style. This is the style in art and writing that came after the Renaissance and had gone downhill from it. It spread out from Italy in the 1600s. (Translator's note.)

12 The original German word is Freizügig. In today's German Empire, it means having the free right to move from one German state to another, without paying money and without other limits. There is also a play on words with Zug zur Freiheit, which means "a pull toward freedom," and this cannot be put into English. (Translator's note.)

13 Nietzsche seems to be talking about himself here, because in the end his short-sightedness became so bad that he was nearly blind. (Translator's note.)

14 The play on the German words bergen, meaning to shelter, and verbergen, meaning to hide, cannot be put into English. (Translator's note.)

15 This points to a German saying: "Where there is nothing, even the Emperor has lost his rights." (Translator's note.)

16 Genesis, chapter 13, verse 9. (Translator's note.)

17 Luke, chapter 8, verse 33. (Translator's note.)

18 Nietzsche often plays on the German words Freudenschaften, meaning passions that give pleasure, and Leidenschaften, meaning passions that give pain. This cannot be put into English. (Translator's note.)

19 Thrasea Paetus was a Stoic thinker. In 65 A.D., it was found out that he and his wife were part of the great plot against the emperor Nero. It is said that his wife killed herself and, as she did it, told him, "It doesn't hurt, Paetus." (Translator's note.)

20 It is interesting to compare this opinion with the praise that the writer Carlyle gave to Jean Paul. The dressing gown refers to the outfit Jean Paul liked to wear most. (Translator's note.)

21 In Germany, copyright runs out thirty years after a book comes out. (Translator's note.)

22 Nietzsche himself was very short-sighted. (Translator's note.)

23 In the 500s B.C., Pythagoras started a "school" in the town of Croton. It was a bit like a group of monks. One of the hard tests for newcomers was that they had to stay silent for five years. (Translator's note.)

24 The German word Aufklärung has a double meaning here: the weather "clearing up," and "enlightenment," the age of reason. (Translator's note.)

25 This means the French writer Stendhal. (Translator's note.)

26 This turns around the Jesuit motto sacrifizio dell' intelletto, which means "sacrifice of the mind." (Translator's note.)

27 By an odd mistake, the original says "seventh." (Translator's note.)

28 This is clearly about the author's own life. Like all great men, Nietzsche went through a time of being modest and full of doubt. (Translator's note.)

29 Here Nietzsche is talking about his own people, the Germans. (Translator's note.)

30 This points to the poem "Der Wilde" (The Savage) by Seume, which ends with the line "Sehet, wir Wilden sind doch bessere Menschen." That means: "Look, after all, we savages are better people." (Translator's note.)

31 This means Diogenes, who started the Cynic school of thought. The name comes from the Greek word κυών, which means dog. (Translator's note.)

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