



Aphorisms on the Wisdom of Life

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

Musean Translation

MOUSEIA



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Introduction



Happiness is no easy thing: it is very difficult to find within ourselves, and impossible to find elsewhere.

Chamfort.

I use the idea of wisdom in life here in an entirely immanent sense: the art of conducting life as pleasantly and happily as possible. Instruction in this art might also be called eudemonology: a guide, then, to a happy existence. Such an existence might in turn be defined as one decidedly preferable to nonexistence when considered purely objectively—or rather, since the judgment here is subjective, after cool and mature reflection. This conception implies that we would cling to it for its own sake, not merely from fear of death; and from this it follows that we would wish it to last forever. Whether human life answers, or can even answer, to the conception of such an existence is a question that my philosophy, as everyone knows, answers in the negative; eudemonology, however, presupposes an affirmative answer. It rests, in fact, on the inborn error whose exposure opens chapter 49 in the second volume of my principal work. To develop such a guide nonetheless, I have therefore had to depart entirely from the higher, metaphysical and ethical standpoint toward which my philosophy properly leads. The whole exposition offered here consequently rests, in a certain sense, on an accommodation: it remains at the ordinary, empirical standpoint and retains its error. Its value, accordingly, can only be conditional, since even the word eudemonology is merely a euphemism.—Nor does this

exposition make any claim to completeness: partly because the subject is inexhaustible, and partly because otherwise I would have had to repeat what others have already said.

The only book I recall written with an intention similar to these aphorisms is the eminently readable work by *Cardanus*, *On Drawing Benefit from Adversity*, which may therefore supplement what is offered here. *Aristotle*, too, did weave a brief eudemonology into chapter 5 of the first book of his *Rhetoric*, but it turned out rather prosaic. I have made no use of these predecessors, since compilation is not my business; all the less so because it destroys the unity of outlook that is the soul of works of this kind.—In general, of course, the wise of every age have always said the same things, while the fools—that is, the immeasurable majority in every age—have always done the same thing, namely the opposite; and so it will remain. Hence *Voltaire* says: *We shall leave this world as foolish and as wicked as we found it when we arrived.*

Chapter 1



The Fundamental Division.

Aristotle (Eth. Nicom. I, 8) divided the goods of human life into three classes: external goods, goods of the soul, and goods of the body. Retaining nothing from this division but the number three, I say that what determines the differences in the lot of mortals can be traced to three fundamental conditions. They are:

- ¹ What a person *is*: personality, then, in the broadest sense. This includes health, strength, beauty, temperament, moral character, intelligence, and its cultivation.
- ² What a person *has*: property and possessions in every sense.
- ³ What a person *represents*: as is well known, this expression means what someone is in the minds of others—properly speaking, how others *represent that person to themselves*. It therefore consists in their opinion of the person and falls into honor, rank, and fame.

The differences to be considered under the first heading are those that nature itself has established among human beings. This already suggests that their influence on happiness or unhappiness will be far more essential and pervasive than the differences listed under the next two headings, which arise merely from human arrangements. Compared with *genuine personal advantages*—a

great mind or a great heart—all the advantages of rank, birth, even royal birth, wealth, and the like stand as stage kings do to real ones. *Metrodorus*, Epicurus's first disciple, already entitled a chapter: The cause of happiness that lies within us is greater than that which arises from circumstances. (*The cause of happiness that comes from ourselves is greater than the cause that arises from things.*—Cf. Clemens Alex. Strom. II, 21, p. 362 of the Würzburg edition of the opp. polem.) And certainly, for a person's well-being, indeed for the whole manner of existence, the chief consideration is plainly what takes place or passes away within. Here lies the immediate sense of inward ease or unease, which is primarily the result of feeling, willing, and thinking; everything outside has only an indirect influence on it. The same external events or circumstances therefore affect each person quite differently, and even in the same surroundings everyone lives in a different world. For our immediate dealings are only with our own representations, feelings, and movements of will: external things influence us only insofar as they occasion these. The world in which each person lives depends primarily on that person's apprehension of it and thus varies with the differences between minds: accordingly it will be poor, insipid, and shallow, or rich, interesting, and full of meaning. Someone who envies another the interesting events encountered in life ought rather to envy the power of apprehension that gave those events the significance they possess in the account of them: the very event that appears so interesting in a gifted mind would, apprehended by a shallow, commonplace mind, be merely another dull scene from everyday life. This is shown most strikingly in certain poems by Goethe and Byron, evidently founded on actual occurrences: a foolish reader may envy the poet the delightful incident instead of the powerful imagination capable of making something so great and beautiful out of a fairly ordinary event. Likewise, a melancholy person sees a tragic scene where a sanguine person sees only an interesting conflict, and a phlegmatic person something insignificant. All this rests on the fact that every reality—that is, every fulfilled present—consists of two halves, subject and object, although joined as necessarily and intimately as oxygen and hydrogen in water. With the objective half entirely unchanged but the subjective half different, present reality is therefore quite different, just as it

is in the reverse case. The most beautiful and excellent objective half, paired with a dull, inferior subjective half, still produces an inferior reality and present—like a beautiful landscape in bad weather, or reflected in a poor *camera obscura*. To speak more plainly: everyone is enclosed in consciousness as in a skin, and lives immediately only within it; little help can therefore come from outside. Onstage one person plays the prince, another the councilor, a third the servant or the soldier or the general, and so on. But these differences exist only outwardly; within, at the heart of all these appearances, there is the same thing: a poor actor with troubles and hardships. Life is much the same. Differences of rank and wealth assign each person a role, but no inward difference of happiness and ease necessarily corresponds to it. Here too, within everyone is the same poor fellow with troubles and hardships, differing from one person to another in their material, but in form—that is, in their actual essence—much the same for all; though there are differences of degree, these do not follow station and wealth, that is, the role. Since everything that exists and happens for a human being exists immediately only in *consciousness* and happens for it, the constitution of consciousness itself is plainly what matters first; in most cases it matters more than the shapes appearing within it. All splendor and pleasures reflected in a dullard's dim consciousness are very poor beside the consciousness of *Cervantes* as he wrote Don Quixote in an uncomfortable prison.—The objective half of the present and of reality lies in the hands of fate and is therefore changeable; the subjective half is ourselves and is therefore essentially unchangeable. Accordingly, despite every outward change, each person's life bears the same character throughout and may be compared to a series of variations on *one* theme. No one can escape individuality. Just as an animal, in whatever circumstances it is placed, remains confined to the narrow circle that nature has irrevocably drawn around its being—so that our efforts to make a beloved animal happy must always remain within narrow bounds, precisely because of the limits of its nature and consciousness—so it is with human beings: individuality determines in advance the measure of possible happiness. In particular, the limits of intellectual powers fix once and for all the capacity for higher enjoyment. If they are narrow, no efforts from outside, nothing

other people or good fortune can do, will raise someone above the measure of ordinary, half-animal human happiness and comfort. Such a person remains dependent on sensual pleasure, a cozy and cheerful family life, low company, and vulgar pastimes; even education can do relatively little, though something, to widen that circle. For the highest, most varied, and most lasting pleasures are intellectual, however much we may deceive ourselves about this in youth; and these depend chiefly on intellectual power.—This makes clear how greatly our happiness depends on what we *are*, on our individuality, whereas people generally reckon only with our fate, what we *have*, or what we *represent*. Yet fate may improve; moreover, with inward wealth, we shall ask little of it. A fool, by contrast, remains a fool, a dull block a dull block, to the end, even in paradise surrounded by houris. Hence Goethe says:

People, servants, conquerors,
All confess, in every age:
The highest earthly happiness
Is personality alone.

W. O. Divan.

That the subjective is incomparably more essential to our happiness and enjoyment than the objective is confirmed everywhere: from hunger being the best cook and the old man's indifferent gaze at the young man's goddess, up to the lives of genius and saint. Health in particular so far outweighs all external goods that a healthy beggar is truly happier than a sick king. A calm and cheerful temperament arising from perfect health and a fortunate constitution; a clear, lively, penetrating understanding that grasps things correctly; a moderate, gentle will, and consequently a good conscience—these are advantages no rank or wealth can replace. For what a person is to himself, what accompanies him into solitude and what no one can give or take away, is plainly more essential to him than anything he may possess or even what he may be in the eyes of others. A gifted person, in complete solitude, finds excellent entertainment in his own thoughts and imaginings, while for a dull person the endless succession of parties, plays, excursions, and entertainments cannot ward off tormenting boredom. A good, moderate, gentle character can be content in straitened circum-

stances, while a covetous, envious, or wicked one is not content amid all the wealth in the world. And for someone who constantly enjoys an extraordinary, intellectually eminent individuality, most of the pleasures generally pursued are entirely superfluous, indeed merely disturbing and burdensome. Thus Horace says of himself:

Gems, marble, ivory, Tyrrhenian statuettes, paintings,

Silver, garments dyed with Gaetulian purple:

Some lack these things; one has no wish to own them;

and Socrates, seeing luxury goods displayed for sale, said: "How many things there are that I do not need." What we *are*, then—our personality—is absolutely the first and most essential condition of happiness in life, if only because it works constantly and in every circumstance. Moreover, unlike the goods under the other two headings, it is not subject to fate and cannot be taken from us. Its value may in this respect be called absolute, in contrast to the merely relative value of the other two. From this it follows that a person is much less accessible to outside influences than people tend to suppose. Only all-powerful time asserts its rights even here: bodily and intellectual advantages gradually succumb to it; moral character alone remains beyond its reach. In this respect, admittedly, the goods under the last two headings, which time does not directly steal, would have an advantage over those under the first. A second advantage might be found in their being objective and hence, by their nature, attainable, so that everyone at least has the possibility of acquiring them; whereas the subjective is not placed in our power at all, but enters by *divine right* and stands unalterably fixed for life. Here, then, the following pronouncement applies inexorably:

As on the day that gave you to the world
The sun stood in the planets' greeting,
You grew at once and ever onward
By the law that governed your beginning.
So you must be: yourself you cannot flee;
So said the Sibyls, so the prophets;
No time and no power breaks apart
The imprinted form unfolding as it lives.

Goethe.

The only thing within our power in this respect is to use the personality we have been given to the best possible advantage: to pursue only the endeavors that suit it, to seek precisely the cultivation appropriate to it and avoid every other kind, and thus to choose the station, occupation, and way of life that fit it.

A Herculean man endowed with unusual muscular strength, whom external circumstances compel to follow a sedentary occupation, some petty, painstaking handicraft, or studies and intellectual work requiring quite different powers that are weak in him—so that he must leave precisely his outstanding powers unused—will feel unhappy all his life. Still more unhappy will be someone whose intellectual powers greatly predominate but who must leave them undeveloped and unused to carry on some common business that has no need of them, or even physical labor for which his strength is not really sufficient. Here, however, especially in youth, we must avoid the reef of presumption and not credit ourselves with an abundance of powers we do not possess.

The decided preponderance of our first heading over the other two also shows that it is wiser to work at preserving health and developing abilities than at acquiring wealth. This must not, however, be misconstrued to mean that one should neglect to acquire what is necessary and appropriate. But wealth properly speaking—that is, great abundance—can do little for our happiness. Hence many rich people feel unhappy because they lack true intellectual cultivation and knowledge, and therefore any objective interest that might equip them for intellectual occupation. What wealth can provide beyond the satisfaction of

real and natural needs has little influence on our actual well-being; rather, this is disturbed by the many inevitable cares that maintaining a large fortune entails. Yet people take a thousand times more trouble to acquire wealth than intellectual cultivation, though what we *are* certainly contributes far more to our happiness than what we *have*. We therefore see many people, tirelessly busy and industrious as ants, striving from morning until night to increase the wealth they already possess. They know nothing beyond the narrow horizon of the means to this end: their minds are empty and consequently unreceptive to everything else. The highest pleasures, those of the mind, are inaccessible to them. They try in vain to replace these with the fleeting sensual pleasures, costing little time but much money, that they allow themselves in between. At the end of life, if fortune has favored them, they really do have a considerable heap of money as the result of it all, which they now leave their heirs to increase further or else squander. Such a life, although conducted with a very serious and important air, is therefore as foolish as many another that frankly took the fool's cap and bells for its emblem.

What a person *possesses in himself*, then, is the most essential thing for happiness in life. It is only because this is generally so very little that most people who have risen above the struggle with want feel, at bottom, just as unhappy as those still wrestling with it. Their inward emptiness, the insipidity of their consciousness, the poverty of their minds drives them into society, which consists of others just like themselves; for *like delights in like*. Together they hunt for diversion and entertainment, seeking it first in sensual pleasures, then in amusements of every kind, and finally in excess. The source of the ruinous extravagance by which so many sons of wealthy families, entering life rich, run through their large inheritances—often in an incredibly short time—is really nothing but the boredom arising from the poverty and emptiness of mind just described. Such a young man was sent into the world outwardly rich but inwardly poor, and now strove in vain to replace inward wealth with outward wealth, expecting to receive everything *from outside*—like old men who seek renewed strength from the bodily emanations of young girls. In the end, inward poverty thus brought outward poverty with it as well.

I need not emphasize the importance of the other two headings of the goods of human life. The value of possessions is so universally acknowledged today that it requires no recommendation. The third heading even has a very ethereal character beside the second, since it consists merely in the opinions of others. Everyone, however, should strive for honor—that is, a good name; only those who serve the state need strive for rank, and only a very few for fame. Yet honor is regarded as a priceless good, and fame as the most precious thing a human being can attain, the golden fleece of the chosen; only fools, by contrast, will prefer rank to possessions. The second and third headings, moreover, stand in what is called a reciprocal relationship: Petronius's *if you have, you will be esteemed* holds true, and conversely the favorable opinion of others, in all its forms, often helps one acquire possessions.

Chapter 2



What a Person Is.

We have already recognized in general that this contributes far more to happiness than what a person *has* or *represents*. Everything always depends on what someone is, and consequently possesses in himself: individuality accompanies him always and everywhere, and colors everything he experiences. In everything and through everything, what he immediately enjoys is only himself. This is true even of physical pleasures; how much more of intellectual ones. The English expression *to enjoy one's self* is therefore very apt: one says, for example, *he enjoys himself at Paris*, not “he enjoys Paris” but “he enjoys *himself* in Paris.”—But if the individuality is poorly constituted, all pleasures are like exquisite wines in a mouth tainted with bile. Accordingly, in good fortune as in bad, apart from grave calamities, what matters less is what meets and befalls us in life than how we feel it: the kind and degree of our receptivity in every respect. What someone is inwardly and possesses in himself—in short, personality and its worth—is the sole immediate condition of happiness and well-being. Everything else is indirect; its effect can therefore be frustrated, while the effect of personality never can. For this very reason, envy directed at personal advantages is the most implacable, as well as the most carefully concealed. Moreover, only the constitution of consciousness endures and persists, and individuality acts continuously, constantly, more or less at every moment.

Everything else, by contrast, acts only at certain times, occasionally and temporarily, and is itself also subject to change and alteration. Hence Aristotle says: nature is steadfast, not possessions (*for nature endures, not wealth*). Eth. Eud. VII, 2. This is why we bear a misfortune that comes wholly from outside with greater composure than one of our own making: fate may change, but our own constitution never does. Subjective goods, then—a noble character, an able mind, a fortunate temperament, a cheerful disposition, and a well-formed, entirely healthy body; in general, *a sound mind in a sound body* (Juvenal. Sat. X, 356)—are the first and most important conditions of happiness. We should therefore take much more care to foster and preserve them than to possess external goods and external honor.

Of all these things, however, what makes us happy most immediately is cheerfulness of mind, for this good quality rewards itself on the spot. Whoever is cheerful always has a reason to be so: precisely the fact of being cheerful. Nothing can so completely replace every other good as this quality, while nothing can replace it. Someone may be young, beautiful, rich, and honored; if we wish to judge his happiness, the question is whether he is cheerful as well. If, on the other hand, he is cheerful, it makes no difference whether he is young or old, straight or hunchbacked, poor or rich: he is happy. In early youth I once opened an old book and found: “Whoever laughs much is happy, and whoever weeps much is unhappy”—a very simple-minded observation, which I nevertheless could not forget because of its simple truth, however much it may be the superlative of a *truism*. We should therefore open every door to cheerfulness whenever it appears, for it never comes at the wrong time. Instead we often hesitate to admit it, first wanting to know whether we really have reason to be content in every respect, or fearing that it will interrupt our serious reflections and important cares. Yet what we shall improve through these is very uncertain, whereas cheerfulness is an immediate gain. It alone is, so to speak, the ready coin of happiness, and not, like everything else, merely a banknote, because it alone makes us happy immediately in the present. It is therefore the highest good for beings whose reality takes the form of an indivisible present between two infinite stretches of time. We should accordingly place the acquisition and

fostering of this good before every other endeavor. Now nothing contributes less to cheerfulness than wealth, and nothing more than health: cheerful and contented faces are at home among the lower, working classes, especially those who cultivate the soil; discontented faces among the rich and distinguished. Above all, therefore, we should strive to preserve that high degree of perfect health whose blossom is cheerfulness. The means are familiar: avoiding all excess and dissipation, all violent or unpleasant emotions, and all excessive or prolonged intellectual exertion; at least two hours of brisk movement in the open air every day, frequent cold bathing, and similar rules of physical regimen. Without sufficient daily movement one cannot remain healthy: to be properly performed, all processes of life require movement both of the parts in which they occur and of the whole. Hence Aristotle rightly says: life consists in movement. Life consists in movement and has its essence in it. Throughout the interior of the organism there is incessant, rapid motion: the heart, in its complicated double systole and diastole, beats vigorously and tirelessly; in 28 beats it has driven the entire mass of blood through the whole greater and lesser circulation. The lungs pump continually like a steam engine; the intestines constantly writhe in *peristaltic motion*; all glands continuously absorb and secrete; even the brain has a double movement with every pulse and every breath. If, amid all this, external movement is almost entirely absent, as it is in the wholly sedentary lives of countless people, a glaring and destructive disproportion arises between outward stillness and inward tumult. Indeed, constant inward movement needs some support from outward movement; that disproportion becomes analogous to the state in which some emotion makes us boil within while we must show no outward sign. Even trees need the movement of the wind to flourish. Here a rule holds that can be expressed most briefly in Latin: *every movement, the swifter it is, is all the more movement*.—How greatly our happiness depends on cheerfulness of mood, and this on the state of our health, is shown by comparing the impression the same external circumstances or events make on us on a healthy, vigorous day with the impression they produce when ill health has made us irritable and anxious. It is not what things objectively and actually are, but what they are for us, in our apprehension, that

makes us happy or unhappy. This is precisely the meaning of Epictetus's saying: it is not things that disturb people, but their opinions about things (*people are moved not by things, but by opinions about things*). In general, 9/10 of our happiness rests on health alone. With it, everything becomes a source of pleasure; without it, no external good, of whatever kind, can be enjoyed, and even the other subjective goods—the qualities of intellect, disposition, and temperament—are subdued and greatly impaired by ill health. It is therefore not without reason that people first ask after one another's health and wish one another well: this really is by far the chief condition of human happiness. It follows, however, that the greatest of all follies is to sacrifice health for anything whatever: for gain, advancement, learning, fame, much less for sensuality and fleeting pleasures. Everything, rather, should come second to it.

Yet however much health contributes to the cheerfulness so essential to our happiness, cheerfulness does not depend on health alone: even in perfect health a melancholy temperament and a predominantly gloomy mood can persist. The ultimate cause undoubtedly lies in the original, and therefore unalterable, constitution of the organism, and chiefly in the more or less normal relation of sensibility to irritability and reproductive power. An abnormal predominance of sensibility will produce uneven moods, periodic excessive cheerfulness, and prevailing melancholy. Since genius, too, depends on a surplus of nervous power, and thus of sensibility, Aristotle quite rightly observed that all distinguished and superior people are melancholic: all men who have become outstanding in philosophy, politics, poetry, or the arts appear to be melancholic (Probl. 30, 1). This is doubtless the passage Cicero had in mind in his often-quoted report: *Aristotle says that all men of genius are melancholic* (Tusc. I, 33). The great inborn differences of fundamental mood considered here in general have been very charmingly portrayed by *Shakespeare*:

Nature has fram'd strange fellows in her time:
Some that will evermore peep through their eyes,
And laugh, like parrots, at a bag-piper;
And others of such vinegar aspect,
That they'll not show their teeth in way of smile,
Though Nestor swear the jest be laughable[A].
Merch. of Ven. Sc. I.

[A] Nature has produced strange fellows in her time: some who always peer cheerfully out of their little eyes and laugh like parrots at a bagpiper, and others with such sour expressions that they will not bare their teeth in a smile, even if Nestor himself should swear the joke was worth laughing at.

This is the very difference *Plato* designates by the expressions difficult-tempered and easy-tempered. It can be traced to the very different receptivity to pleasant and unpleasant impressions in different people, as a result of which one still laughs at what almost drives another to despair. Receptivity to pleasant impressions generally grows weaker as receptivity to unpleasant ones grows stronger, and conversely. When an undertaking has equal chances of a happy and an unhappy outcome, the difficult-tempered person will be irritated or grieve at the unhappy outcome but take no joy in the happy one; the easy-tempered person, by contrast, will neither be irritated nor grieve at the unhappy outcome but will rejoice at the happy one. If nine of the difficult-tempered person's ten undertakings succeed, he takes no pleasure in these but is vexed by the one failure; in the reverse case, the easy-tempered person still knows how to console and cheer himself with the one success.—But since hardly any evil is wholly without compensation, here too it follows that difficult-tempered people—gloomy and anxious characters—will generally have to endure more imaginary misfortunes and sufferings, but fewer real ones, than cheerful and carefree people. For someone who sees everything in black, always fears the worst, and takes precautions accordingly will not so often have miscalculated as someone who always gives things a cheerful color and prospect.—If, however, a morbid condition of the nervous system or the organs of digestion reinforces an inborn difficult temperament, this can rise to a degree at which persistent discomfort pro-

duces weariness of life and consequently an inclination to suicide. The slightest unpleasantness can then occasion it; indeed, at the highest degrees of the disorder, even this is unnecessary. The persistent discomfort alone leads to a decision to commit suicide, which is then carried out with such cool deliberation and firm resolve that the patient, usually already under supervision and constantly intent on it, seizes the first unguarded moment to take, without hesitation, struggle, or shrinking back, this means of relief, now natural and welcome to him. *Esquirol, On Mental Illness*, gives detailed descriptions of this state. Certainly, however, even the healthiest and perhaps the most cheerful person may, under certain circumstances, decide on suicide, namely when the magnitude of suffering or of an inescapably approaching calamity overcomes the terrors of death. The difference lies only in the magnitude of the occasion required, which stands in inverse proportion to the difficult temperament. The stronger this is, the slighter the occasion may be, ultimately sinking to zero; conversely, the stronger the easy temperament and the health supporting it, the more the occasion must contain. There are therefore countless gradations between the two extremes of suicide: that arising purely from a morbid intensification of an inborn difficult temperament, and that of a healthy and cheerful person on entirely objective grounds.

Beauty is in part akin to health. Although this subjective advantage contributes to our happiness not properly directly but only indirectly, through its impression on others, it is nevertheless of great importance, even in a man. Beauty is an open letter of recommendation that wins hearts for us in advance; hence Homer's verses apply especially to it:

Not to be cast aside are the gods' glorious gifts,

Whatever they themselves bestow: no one could take them at will.

The broadest survey shows us the two enemies of human happiness: pain and boredom. We may further observe that as we succeed in distancing ourselves from one, we approach the other, and conversely; so that life really presents a stronger or weaker oscillation between them. This arises because they stand in a double opposition to one another, outward or objective, and inward or subjective. Outwardly, want and privation produce pain, while security and abun-

dance produce boredom. We accordingly see the lower classes in a constant struggle against want, and thus pain, while the wealthy and distinguished world struggles continually, often quite desperately, against boredom. Their inward or subjective opposition rests on the fact that in each individual receptivity to one is inversely related to receptivity to the other, being determined by the measure of intellectual powers. Dullness of mind is generally joined to dullness of feeling and a lack of excitability, a constitution less receptive to pains and sorrows of every kind and degree. Yet from this very dullness of mind arises, on the other side, that *inward emptiness* stamped on countless faces, and betrayed by a constantly alert attention to every event in the external world, even the smallest. This is the true source of boredom, always thirsting for outward stimulation to set mind and disposition in motion with something. It is therefore not fastidious in its choice, as witness the wretched pastimes to which people resort, the nature of their society and conversation, and no less the many people standing in doorways and gazing from windows. It is chiefly this inward emptiness that breeds the craving for society, distraction, amusement, and luxury of every kind, leading many to extravagance and then to misery. Nothing guards against this misery so surely as *inward* wealth, the wealth of the mind; for the nearer it approaches eminence, the less room it leaves for boredom. The inexhaustible activity of thoughts, their ever-renewed play over the manifold appearances of the inner and outer world, the power and impulse to make ever-new combinations of them, place the eminent mind entirely beyond boredom's reach, apart from moments of exhaustion. On the other hand, heightened intelligence has increased sensibility as its immediate condition and greater vehemence of will, and thus of passion, as its root. Its union with these gives rise to much stronger emotions of every kind and a heightened sensitivity to mental and even physical pain, as well as greater impatience with every obstacle or even disturbance. All this is powerfully intensified by the vividness of all representations, including disagreeable ones, arising from a strong imagination. What has been said applies proportionately to every intermediate degree filling the wide interval between the dullest fool and the greatest genius. Consequently, subjectively as well as objectively, everyone stands nearer to one source of the sufferings of

human life in proportion as he is farther from the other. His natural inclination will accordingly guide him to adapt the objective as closely as possible to the subjective in this respect, taking greater precautions against *the* source of suffering to which he is more receptive. The gifted person will strive above all for freedom from pain and harassment, for peace and leisure; he will therefore seek a quiet, modest life, but as undisturbed as possible, and accordingly, after some acquaintance with so-called people, will choose retirement and, if his mind is great, even solitude. For the more someone possesses in himself, the less he needs from outside and the less other people can be to him. Hence eminence of mind leads to unsociability. Indeed, if the quality of society could be replaced by quantity, living even in the great world would be worth the trouble; unfortunately, a hundred fools in a heap still do not make one sensible man.—Someone at the opposite extreme, as soon as want gives him breathing room, will seek diversion and company at any price, readily content with anything and fleeing nothing so much as himself. For in solitude, where everyone is thrown back upon himself, what he possesses *in himself* is revealed: there the fool in purple groans under the inescapable burden of his wretched individuality, while the highly gifted person peoples and animates the most desolate surroundings with his thoughts. Thus *Seneca* says very truly: *all folly suffers from weariness of itself* (ep. 9); as does the saying of Jesus Sirach: “The fool’s life is worse than death.” Accordingly, in general, everyone will be found sociable in proportion to his poverty of mind and general commonness. For in this world one has little more than a choice between solitude and vulgarity. Negroes are said to be the most sociable of all people, just as they are decidedly backward intellectually: according to reports from North America in French newspapers (le Commerce, Octbr. 19, 1837), Black people, free and enslaved together, crowd in large numbers into the narrowest space because they cannot see their black, snub-nosed faces repeated often enough.

Since the brain appears as the parasite or pensioner of the whole organism, the *free leisure* anyone has won, granting free enjoyment of consciousness and individuality, is the fruit and yield of the whole of existence, which otherwise is nothing but toil and labor. What, then, does most people’s free leisure yield?

Boredom and dullness, whenever sensual pleasures or foolishness are not there to fill it. How utterly worthless it is appears in the way they spend it: it is precisely Ariosto's *long idleness of ignorant men*. Ordinary people think only of *passing* time; anyone with a talent, of *using* it.—Limited minds are so exposed to boredom because their intellect is nothing more than the *medium of motives* for their will. If there are no motives to apprehend for the moment, the will rests and the intellect takes a holiday, since neither sets itself to work on its own account. The result is a terrible stagnation of all powers throughout the person: boredom. To meet this, little motives, merely temporary and arbitrarily assumed, are placed before the will to stir it and thereby activate the intellect that must apprehend them. They stand to real, natural motives as paper money to silver, since their validity is arbitrarily assumed. Such motives are *games*, with cards and so forth, invented for this very purpose. If these are lacking, the limited person helps himself by rattling or drumming with whatever he can lay hands on. A cigar, too, is a welcome substitute for thoughts.—Hence card-playing has become the chief occupation of all society in every country: it is the measure of its worth and a declaration of complete bankruptcy in thought. Having no thoughts to exchange, they exchange cards and try to take one another's guilders. O pitiable race! Yet to avoid being unjust even here, I will not suppress the thought that in defense of card-playing one might perhaps say it is a preliminary exercise for life in society and business: one learns to use wisely circumstances unalterably given by chance—the cards—to make whatever one can of them, and in doing so grows accustomed to maintaining composure by putting a cheerful face on a bad hand. Yet precisely for this reason card-playing also has a demoralizing influence. The spirit of the game is to win away another's possessions by every means, every trick, and every stratagem. But the habit of acting this way in play takes root and extends into practical life; little by little one comes to act in just the same way in matters of mine and yours, regarding every advantage in hand as permissible so long as the law allows it. Civil life provides evidence of this daily.—Since, then, as I have said, *free leisure* is the blossom, or rather the fruit, of everyone's existence, because it alone puts us in possession of our own selves, those should be called happy who

then find something worthwhile in themselves; whereas for the great majority free leisure yields nothing but a fellow who is good for nothing, terribly bored and a burden to himself. Let us therefore rejoice, “dear brothers, that we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.” (Gal. 4, 31.)

Further, just as the happiest country is the one needing few imports or none, so is the person who finds enough in inward wealth and needs little or nothing from outside for entertainment. Such supplies are costly, create dependence, bring danger, cause annoyance, and in the end are only a poor substitute for the produce of one’s own soil. For one must not expect much in any respect from others, or from outside generally. What one person can be to another has very narrow limits: in the end everyone remains alone, and then what matters is *who* is alone. Here too, then, applies what Goethe said in general (Dicht. u. Wahrh. Bd. 3, S. 474): in all things everyone is ultimately thrown back upon himself; or, as *Oliver Goldsmith* says:

Still to ourselves in ev’ry place consign’d,

Our own felicity we make or find.

(The Traveller v. 431 sq.)

The best and greatest part, therefore, everyone must be and provide for himself. The more this amounts to, and the more he consequently finds the sources of enjoyment within himself, the happier he will be. Aristotle therefore says with the greatest justice: happiness belongs to the self-sufficient (Eth. Eud. VII, 2); in other words, happiness belongs to those who suffice for themselves. For all external sources of happiness and enjoyment are by their nature exceedingly uncertain, precarious, transient, and subject to chance; even under the most favorable circumstances they may easily fail, and indeed this is inevitable, since they cannot always be at hand. In old age almost all of them necessarily dry up: love, jest, the desire for travel, delight in horses, and fitness for society then desert us; death even carries off friends and relatives. More than ever, then, what matters is what a person possesses in himself, for this will hold out longest. Yet at every age it is and remains the genuine and only enduring source of happiness. There is not much to be gained anywhere in the world: want and pain fill it, and boredom lies in wait in every corner for those who have escaped

them. Moreover, wickedness generally rules it, and folly has the loudest voice. Fate is cruel and people are pitiable. In a world so constituted, someone who possesses much in himself resembles the bright, warm, cheerful Christmas room amid the snow and ice of a December night. An excellent, rich individuality, and especially a great deal of intelligence, is therefore undoubtedly the happiest lot on earth, however different it may prove from the most brilliant one. Thus Queen Christina of Sweden, only 19 years old, spoke wisely of Descartes, whom she knew as yet only through *one* essay and oral reports, and who had then been living in the deepest solitude in Holland for 20 years: *Mr. Descartes is the happiest of all men, and his condition seems to me worthy of envy.* (Vie de Descartes par Baillet, Liv. VII, ch. 10.) Only external circumstances, as in Descartes's case, must be favorable enough to allow one to possess oneself and take pleasure in it; hence Ecclesiastes (7, 12) already says: "Wisdom is good with an inheritance, and helps a person enjoy the sun." Whoever is granted this lot by the favor of nature and fate will watch with anxious care that the inward source of happiness remains accessible; independence and leisure are its conditions. He will therefore gladly buy these through moderation and thrift, all the more because, unlike others, he is not dependent on external sources of pleasure. The prospect of offices, money, favor, and the world's applause will consequently not tempt him to abandon himself in order to accommodate people's low purposes or bad taste. If the occasion arises, he will act like *Horace* in the epistle to Maecenas (Lib. I, ep. 7). It is a great folly to lose *inwardly* in order to gain *outwardly*—that is, to surrender all or most of one's peace, leisure, and independence for brilliance, rank, pomp, titles, and honor. Yet *Goethe* did this. My genius has drawn me decisively in the other direction.

The truth discussed here—that the chief source of human happiness springs from within ourselves—is also confirmed by *Aristotle's* very sound observation in the Nicomachean Ethics (I, 7; et VII, 13, 14), that every pleasure presupposes some activity, and thus the exercise of some power, and cannot exist without it. Stobaeus likewise reproduces this Aristotelian teaching, that a person's happiness consists in the unimpeded exercise of his outstanding ability, in his account of Peripatetic ethics (Ecl. eth. II, c. 7, p. 268-278); for example, happi-

ness is activity in accordance with excellence, in actions proceeding according to one's wish (*happiness is the exercise of virtue through actions crowned with success*); he also explains that excellence means mastery of any kind. Now the original purpose of the powers with which nature has equipped human beings is the struggle against the want that presses upon them from every side. But when this struggle pauses, the unoccupied powers become a burden: one must now *play* with them, that is, use them without a purpose; otherwise one immediately falls prey to the other source of human suffering, boredom. This therefore torments the great and wealthy above all, and Lucretius already gave a description of their misery whose aptness can still be recognized daily in every large city:

Often he leaves his spacious house,
The man weary of being home, and suddenly returns,
Finding things outside no better.
He races his ponies headlong to his country house,
As though hurrying to rescue a roof in flames;
At once he yawns when he has crossed its threshold,
Or sinks heavily into sleep and seeks oblivion,
Or hastens back to town and visits it again.

III, 1073.

In youth these gentlemen must make do with muscular and sexual powers. Later, however, only the intellectual powers remain; if these are lacking, or if their cultivation and the accumulated material for their activity are lacking, the misery is great. Since the *will* is the only inexhaustible power, it is now stimulated by arousing the passions—for example through high-stakes gambling, that truly degrading vice.—In general, every unoccupied individual will choose, according to the powers predominating within him, some play to occupy them: perhaps bowling or chess, hunting or painting, racing or music, cards or poetry, heraldry or philosophy, and so on. We can even investigate the matter systematically by going back to the root of all manifestations of human power, namely the *three fundamental physiological powers*, which we must therefore consider here in their purposeless play. In this they appear as the sources of three kinds

of possible enjoyment, from which everyone will choose what suits him according as one or another of these powers predominates. First, then, the pleasures of *reproductive power*: these consist in eating, drinking, digesting, resting, and sleeping. Other peoples even celebrate these as the national pleasures of whole nations. Second, the pleasures of *irritability*: walking, jumping, wrestling, dancing, fencing, riding, and athletic games of every kind, as well as hunting and even combat and war. Third, the pleasures of *sensibility*: contemplating, thinking, feeling, composing poetry, creating visual art, making music, learning, reading, meditating, inventing, philosophizing, and so on.—Many reflections might be made on the value, degree, and duration of each kind of pleasure; these are left to the reader. But everyone will see that our pleasure, always dependent on the use of our own powers, and consequently our happiness, consisting in its frequent recurrence, will be greater the nobler the power on which it depends. Nor will anyone deny the precedence in this respect of sensibility, whose decided predominance distinguishes human beings from the other animal species, over the other two fundamental physiological powers, which animals possess in an equal or even higher degree. Our powers of cognition belong to sensibility; its predominance therefore equips us for pleasures consisting in *knowing*, the so-called *intellectual* pleasures, and for greater pleasures the more decided that predominance is[B]. An ordinary, normal person can take a lively interest in something only when it stirs his *will*, and thus concerns him personally. Every lasting excitement of the *will*, however, is at least mixed in character, and therefore linked with pain. Card-playing, the universal occupation of “good society” everywhere[C], deliberately stimulates it through interests so small that they can cause only momentary, slight pains, not lasting and serious ones, and may thus be regarded as a mere tickling of the will.—A person whose intellectual powers predominate, by contrast, is capable of the liveliest interest through *knowledge* alone, without any involvement of the *will*, and indeed needs such interest. It then transports him into a region to which pain is essentially foreign, as though into the atmosphere of the gods who live at ease, the gods who live lightly. Thus while the lives of others pass in dullness, their every thought and endeavor directed entirely toward the petty interests of

personal welfare and hence toward miseries of every kind, so that unbearable boredom overtakes them as soon as their occupation with those ends ceases and they are thrown back upon themselves, and only the wild fire of passion can stir this stagnant mass—the person endowed with predominant intellectual powers has, by contrast, an existence rich in thought, thoroughly animated and meaningful. Worthy and interesting objects occupy him as soon as he may give himself over to them, and within himself he carries a source of the noblest pleasures. Outward stimulation comes from the works of nature and the spectacle of human activity, and then from the varied achievements of the highly gifted of all ages and countries, which he alone can fully enjoy because he alone can fully understand and feel them. It was therefore really for him that they lived, and to him that they truly addressed themselves, while others, merely accidental listeners, half-understand one thing or another. To be sure, all this gives him one need more than others: the need to learn, see, study, meditate, and practice, and consequently the need for free leisure. But precisely because, as *Voltaire* rightly observes, *there are no true pleasures without true needs*, this need is the condition that opens to him enjoyments denied to others, for whom the beauties of nature and art and intellectual works of every kind, even if they heap them up around themselves, are at bottom only what courtesans are to an old man. Such a favored person consequently leads, beside his personal life, a second, intellectual life, which gradually becomes his true purpose, to which he regards the first merely as a means; while for others this insipid, empty, sorrowful existence must itself count as the purpose. That intellectual life will therefore chiefly occupy him, and through the continual increase of insight and knowledge it acquires coherence, a steady development, a wholeness and perfection growing ever more complete, like a work of art coming into being. Against this, the merely practical life of others, directed only toward personal welfare and capable of increasing only in length, not depth, stands in sad contrast; yet, as I have said, they must regard it as an end in itself, while to him it is merely a means.

[B] Nature continually rises higher: first from the mechanical and chemical activity of the inorganic realm to the vegetable realm and its dim self-enjoyment; from there to the animal kingdom, with which intelligence and consciousness dawn, rising step by step from weak beginnings until, with the last and greatest step, they reach the *human being*. In the human intellect, then, nature attains the summit and goal of its productions, providing the most perfect and difficult thing it can bring forth. Yet even within the human species the intellect displays many marked gradations and very rarely reaches the highest, that of truly elevated intelligence. This, then, in the narrower and stricter sense, is nature's most difficult and highest product, and consequently the rarest and most valuable thing the world has to show. In such an intelligence the clearest consciousness emerges, and the world accordingly presents itself more distinctly and completely than anywhere else. The person endowed with it therefore possesses the noblest and most precious thing on earth and has a corresponding source of pleasures beside which all others are slight. From outside he needs nothing further than leisure to enjoy this possession undisturbed and polish his diamond. For all other, nonintellectual pleasures are of a lower kind: they all amount to movements of will—to wishing, hoping, fearing, and attaining, whatever their object—which can never occur without pain; moreover, attainment generally brings more or less disappointment, whereas in intellectual pleasures truth grows ever clearer. In the realm of intelligence no pain rules: everything is knowledge. All intellectual pleasures, however, are accessible to everyone only through, and thus in proportion to, his own intelligence; for *all the intelligence in the world is useless to someone who has none*. Yet a real disadvantage accompanying this privilege is that throughout nature the capacity for pain increases with the degree of intelligence, and therefore likewise reaches its highest degree only here.

[C] *Vulgarity* consists, at bottom, in willing wholly predominating over knowing in consciousness, to the point that knowledge occurs solely in the service of the will. Wherever this service does not require it—where there are no motives, great or small—knowledge therefore ceases entirely, and complete emptiness of thought ensues. Now willing without knowledge is the commonest thing there

is: every block of wood possesses it and shows it at least when it falls. Hence that state constitutes vulgarity. Only the sense organs and the slight activity of understanding needed to apprehend their data remain active in it. Consequently the vulgar person is continually open to every impression and immediately notices everything happening around him, so that the faintest sound and every circumstance, however trifling, at once arouse his attention, just as with animals. This whole state becomes visible in his face and entire outward appearance, producing the vulgar look, whose impression is all the more repellent when, as is usually the case, the will alone filling consciousness here is low, selfish, and generally bad.

Our practical, actual life is boring and insipid when the passions do not stir it; when they do, it soon becomes painful. Hence only those are fortunate who have received some surplus of intellect beyond the measure required to serve their will. With it they lead, beside their actual life, an intellectual one that continually occupies and entertains them vividly yet *painlessly*. Mere leisure—that is, an intellect *unoccupied* in the service of the will—is not enough: a real surplus of *power* is required, for this alone enables a purely intellectual occupation that does not serve the will. Otherwise, *leisure without learning is death and the burial of a living person* (Sen. ep. 82). According as this surplus is small or great, there are countless gradations of the intellectual life that can be led beside the actual one, from merely collecting and describing insects, birds, minerals, or coins to the highest achievements of poetry and philosophy. Such an intellectual life, however, guards not only against boredom but also against its ruinous consequences. It becomes a defense against bad company and the many dangers, misfortunes, losses, and extravagances into which one falls when seeking happiness entirely in the actual world. My philosophy, for example, has never brought me anything in, but it has saved me a great deal.

The normal person, by contrast, depends for enjoyment of life on things *outside himself*: possessions, rank, wife and children, friends, society, and so on. On these his happiness rests, and therefore it collapses when he loses them or finds himself deceived in them. To express this relation we may say that his center of gravity lies *outside himself*. For this very reason his wishes and whims are

always changing: if his means permit, he will buy country houses, then horses, give parties, then travel, and generally indulge in great luxury, because he seeks satisfaction *from outside* in things of every kind—like an enfeebled person hoping to gain from consommés and apothecaries’ drugs the health and strength whose true source is his own vital power. Now, rather than going straight to the opposite extreme, let us place beside him a man whose intellectual powers are not exactly eminent but still exceed the usual scant measure. We see him perhaps practicing a fine art as an amateur, or pursuing an empirical discipline such as botany, mineralogy, physics, astronomy, history, or the like, and soon finding a great part of his enjoyment there, taking refuge in it when those external sources fail or no longer satisfy him. We can say that his center of gravity already lies partly *within himself*. Yet mere amateur practice of art is still far from creative ability, and mere empirical disciplines remain with the relations of appearances to one another. Thus the whole person cannot be absorbed in them, his entire being cannot be filled to its depths by them, and his existence cannot become so interwoven with them that he loses interest in everything else. This remains reserved for the highest intellectual eminence, generally called genius. It alone takes the existence and essence of things as a whole and absolutely for its theme, and then strives, according to its individual direction, to express its profound apprehension of them through art, poetry, or philosophy. Only a person of this kind therefore urgently needs undisturbed occupation with himself, his thoughts and works; solitude is welcome, free leisure the highest good, everything else dispensable, and often merely burdensome when present. Of such a person alone can we say that his center of gravity lies *wholly within himself*. This even explains why the exceedingly rare people of this kind, despite the best of characters, do not show the intimate and boundless concern for friends, family, and community of which some others are capable: for they can ultimately console themselves for everything, so long as they have themselves. They thus contain one more isolating element, all the more effective because others never really satisfy them completely; hence they cannot see others as entirely their equals. Indeed, since they constantly feel something unlike

themselves in everyone and everything, they gradually grow accustomed to moving among human beings as creatures of another kind, and, in their thoughts about them, to using the third rather than the first person plural.—

From this standpoint, someone whom nature has endowed very richly in intellect appears the happiest, as surely as the subjective lies closer to us than the objective, whose influence, whatever it may be, is always mediated through the subjective and is therefore only secondary. The beautiful verses also attest this:

The soul's wealth alone is true wealth;
The rest holds more ruin than riches.

Lucian in Anthol. I, 67.

Someone inwardly rich in this way needs nothing more from outside than a negative gift: free leisure, so that he may cultivate and develop his intellectual abilities and enjoy his inward wealth—in truth, merely permission to be entirely himself, every day and every hour throughout his life. If someone is destined to impress the mark of his mind upon the whole human race, he has only one happiness or unhappiness: being able to develop his gifts completely and finish his works—or being prevented from doing so. Everything else is trivial to him. Accordingly we see the great minds of all ages place the very highest value on free leisure, for everyone's free leisure is worth as much as he himself is worth. Happiness seems to lie in leisure (*bliss appears to be situated in leisure*), says Aristotle (Eth. Nic. X, 7), and Diogenes Laertius (II, 5, 31) reports that Socrates praised leisure as the finest of possessions (*Socrates praised leisure as the most beautiful of all possessions*). Correspondingly, Aristotle (Eth. Nic. X, 7, 8, 9) declares the philosophical life the happiest. Even what he says in the Politics (IV, 11) belongs here: the happy life is the unimpeded life in accordance with excellence; which, thoroughly translated, means: "To be able to exercise one's excellence, of whatever kind, without hindrance is true happiness." It thus agrees with Goethe's saying in Wilhelm Meister: "Whoever is born with a talent and for a talent finds his finest existence in it."—But possessing free leisure is foreign not only to the ordinary lot of humanity but also to ordinary human nature. Our natural destination is to spend our time procuring what is necessary for our own and our family's existence. A human being is a child of want,

not a free intelligence. Accordingly free leisure soon becomes a burden to the ordinary person, and finally a torment, unless he can fill it with all manner of artificially devised and imaginary purposes, with games, pastimes, and hobbies of every kind. For the same reason it also brings danger, since it is rightly said that *peace is difficult in idleness*. On the other hand, an intellect far exceeding the normal measure is likewise abnormal, and thus unnatural. Yet if it does exist, the happiness of its possessor requires precisely that free leisure which is sometimes burdensome and sometimes ruinous to others; without it he will be a Pegasus in harness, and therefore unhappy. If the two departures from nature, the outward and the inward, coincide, it is a great stroke of luck: the person so favored will now lead a higher kind of life, exempt from the two opposed sources of human suffering, want and boredom—the anxious striving for existence and the inability to endure leisure, that is, free existence itself. Ordinarily a person escapes these two evils only through their mutually neutralizing and canceling one another.

Against all this, however, one must consider that great intellectual gifts, owing to predominant nervous activity, bring an extraordinarily heightened sensitivity to pain in every form. Further, the passionate temperament conditioning them, together with the greater vividness and completeness of all representations inseparable from them, produces incomparably greater vehemence in the emotions those representations arouse; yet painful emotions in general outnumber pleasant ones. Finally, great intellectual gifts estrange their possessor from other people and their activities: the more he possesses in himself, the less he can find in them. A hundred things that give them great satisfaction are insipid and unenjoyable to him; thus the law of compensation, which asserts itself everywhere, may perhaps remain in force here too. Indeed, it has often enough been maintained, not without plausibility, that the most intellectually limited person is at bottom the happiest, although no one would envy him this happiness. I am all the less inclined to anticipate the reader's final decision on the matter because even *Sophocles* made two diametrically opposed pronouncements about it:

Wisdom is by far the foremost part of happiness.

(To be wise is by far the first part of happiness.)

Antig. 1328.

and again:

For those who think nothing, life is sweetest.

(Those who think nothing have the most pleasant life.)

Ajax. 550.

The philosophers of the Old Testament are just as much at odds with one another.

“The fool’s life is worse than death!”

(For the fool’s life is worse than death.)

Jes. Sir. 22, 12.

and

“Where there is much wisdom, there is much sorrow.”

(Whoever increases knowledge will increase pain.)

Kohel. 1, 18.

Yet I do not wish to leave unmentioned here that the person who, owing to the strictly and scantily normal measure of his intellectual powers, *has no intellectual needs* is precisely the one designated by an expression peculiar to German: the *philistine*. Originating in student life, it was later used in a higher sense, though still analogous to its original meaning through its opposition to the son of the Muses. Such a person is and remains the man without the Muses. From a higher standpoint, I would define philistines as people continually occupied in the utmost seriousness with a reality that is no reality. But such an already transcendental definition would not suit the popular standpoint I have adopted in this treatise and might therefore not be fully intelligible to every reader. The first definition, by contrast, more readily permits a detailed explanation and sufficiently identifies the essence of the matter, the root of all the qualities characterizing the *philistine*. He is, then, *a person without intellectual needs*. Many things follow from this. First, *regarding himself*, he remains without intellectual *pleasures*, according to the principle already mentioned: *there are no true pleasures without true needs*. No impulse toward knowledge and

insight for their own sake animates his existence, nor any toward properly aesthetic pleasures, which are closely related to the former. Whatever pleasures of this kind fashion or authority nevertheless forces upon him, he will dispose of as quickly as possible, like a kind of forced labor. His only real pleasures are sensual ones, and with these he compensates himself. Oysters and champagne are accordingly the high point of his existence, and procuring everything that contributes to bodily well-being is his life's purpose. Fortunate enough if this gives him much to do! For if those goods have already been bestowed on him in advance, he inevitably falls prey to boredom, against which everything imaginable is tried: balls, theater, company, cards, gambling, horses, women, drinking, travel, and so forth. Yet none of this suffices against boredom where the absence of intellectual needs makes intellectual pleasures impossible. Hence a dull, dry seriousness approaching that of an animal is characteristic of the philistine. Nothing delights him, nothing stirs him, nothing wins his interest. Sensual pleasures are soon exhausted; society consisting of fellow philistines soon grows boring; cards finally become wearisome. At most the pleasures of vanity remain, in his own fashion: surpassing others in wealth, rank, influence, and power, for which they then honor him; or at least associating with those eminent in such things and basking in their reflected splendor (*a snob*).—From the philistine's fundamental quality as stated it follows, *second, regarding others*, that since he has no intellectual but only physical needs, he will seek the person able to satisfy the latter, not the former. Outstanding intellectual abilities will therefore be the very last thing he demands of others. Rather, if he encounters them, they will arouse his aversion, indeed his hatred, for they give him only an oppressive feeling of inferiority and a dull, secret envy, which he conceals most carefully, even trying to hide it from himself; precisely for this reason it sometimes grows into a silent fury. It will therefore never occur to him to measure his esteem or respect by such qualities; these will be reserved exclusively for rank and wealth, power and influence, which in his eyes are the only true advantages, in which he too would wish to excel.—All this, however, follows from his being a person *without intellectual needs*. The great suffering of all philistines is that *ideal things* give them no entertainment; to escape boredom they constantly

need *real things*. These are partly soon exhausted, when they weary instead of entertaining, and partly bring about mischief of every kind, whereas ideal things are inexhaustible and in themselves innocent and harmless.

Throughout this consideration of the personal qualities contributing to our happiness, I have chiefly considered intellectual qualities alongside physical ones. How moral excellence too brings immediate happiness I have already explained in my prize essay *On the Basis of Morality*, § 22, S. 275 (2. Aufl. 272), to which I therefore refer the reader.

Chapter 3



What a Person Has.

The great teacher of happiness, *Epicurus*, rightly and beautifully divided human needs into three classes. First, those that are natural and necessary: those which cause pain if unsatisfied. Consequently only *food and clothing* belong here. They are easy to satisfy. Second, those that are natural but not necessary: the need for sexual satisfaction, although Epicurus does not say this in Laertius's account (indeed, I am presenting his teaching here with some adjustment and refinement in general). This need is already harder to satisfy. Third, those that are neither natural nor necessary: the needs for luxury, extravagance, pomp, and splendor. They are endless and very difficult to satisfy. (See Diog. Laert. L. X, c. 27, § 149, also § 127.—Cic. de fin. I, 13.)

It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine the limit of our reasonable wishes concerning possessions. For everyone's contentment in this respect rests not on an absolute but merely on a relative quantity: the relation between demands and possessions. Thus possessions considered alone are as meaningless as the numerator of a fraction without its denominator. A person does not miss goods it has never occurred to him to claim, but is perfectly content without them; while someone else who possesses a hundred times more feels unhappy because he lacks one thing to which he lays claim. In this respect too, everyone has a horizon of what may possibly be attainable for him, and his demands

extend as far as this horizon. Whenever an object within it presents itself in a way that allows him to trust he will attain it, he feels happy; unhappy, by contrast, when difficulties arise that rob him of the prospect. What lies beyond this horizon does not affect him at all. Hence the great possessions of the rich do not disturb the poor, and conversely the rich person, when his plans fail, is not consoled by the much he already possesses. (Wealth resembles seawater: the more one drinks, the thirstier one becomes.—The same applies to fame.)—That after losing wealth or prosperity our habitual mood, once the first pain is overcome, differs little from its former state arises because, after fate has reduced the factor of our possessions, we ourselves reduce the factor of our demands by an equal amount. This operation, however, is the truly painful part of a misfortune. Once it is completed, the pain is felt less and less, and finally not at all: the wound heals. Conversely, with a stroke of good fortune the restraint on our demands is raised and they expand: in this lies the joy. But this too lasts only until the operation is fully completed: we grow accustomed to the enlarged measure of our demands and indifferent to the possessions corresponding to it. This is already expressed by the Homeric passage, Od. XVIII, 130-137, which ends:

For such is the mind of mortals upon the earth

As the father of men and gods brings on with each day.

The source of our discontent lies in our continually renewed attempts to raise the factor of our demands while the immobility of the other factor prevents it.

—

Among a race so needy and so made up of needs as the human race, it is no wonder that *wealth* is esteemed, indeed revered, more sincerely than anything else, and power itself only as a means to wealth; nor that everything else is pushed aside or overthrown for the sake of acquisition—philosophy, for example, by professors of philosophy.—People are often reproached for directing their wishes chiefly toward money and loving it above everything. Yet it is natural, perhaps even inevitable, to love what, like an untiring Proteus, stands ready at every moment to transform itself into the current object of our ever-changing wishes and manifold needs. Every other good can satisfy only *one*

wish, *one* need: food is good only for the hungry, wine for the healthy, medicine for the sick, a fur coat for winter, women for youth, and so on. They are therefore all goods in relation to something—that is, only relatively good. Money alone is the absolute good, because it meets not merely *one* need *concretely* but *need itself* in general, *in the abstract*.—

The property one possesses should be regarded as a protective wall against the many possible evils and accidents, not as permission, still less an obligation, to procure the world's pleasures.—People who have no property to begin with but eventually find themselves able to earn a great deal through their talents, of whatever kind, almost always imagine that their talent is enduring capital and its earnings the interest. Accordingly they do not save part of what they earn to accumulate lasting capital but spend as much as they make. Later they generally fall into poverty, because their earnings falter or cease: either the talent itself is exhausted, being of a transitory kind, like talent for almost all the fine arts, or it could be put to use only under particular circumstances and conditions that have now ceased. Craftsmen may indeed follow the course described, since the abilities needed for their work are not easily lost, can also be supplied by journeymen's labor, and their products are necessities that therefore always find buyers. Hence the proverb, "A trade has a golden foundation," is true. But artists and *virtuosos* of every kind stand differently; precisely for this reason they are paid dearly. Their earnings should therefore become their capital; instead they presumptuously regard them as mere interest and thus move toward their ruin.—People who possess inherited wealth, on the other hand, at least know correctly from the outset what is capital and what is interest. Most will therefore try to secure the former, never touch it, and if possible save at least an eighth of the interest to meet future interruptions. They therefore generally remain prosperous.—This whole observation does not apply to merchants, since money itself is their means of further acquisition, their tool of trade, so to speak. Even when they have earned it entirely themselves, they therefore seek to preserve and increase it through use. Accordingly wealth is more truly at home in this class than in any other.

In general, however, one will find that those who have actually grappled with want and privation fear them incomparably less, and are consequently more inclined to extravagance, than those who know them only by hearsay. The former include all who have risen fairly quickly from poverty to prosperity through strokes of luck of any kind or through special talents of whatever sort; the latter are those born into prosperity who have remained there. These are generally more mindful of the future, and therefore thriftier, than the former. One might conclude that want is not so bad as it appears from a distance. Yet the true reason is probably rather this: to someone born into hereditary wealth, it appears indispensable, the element of the only possible life, like air itself. He therefore guards it like his life, and is consequently usually orderly, prudent, and thrifty. To someone born into hereditary poverty, by contrast, poverty appears the natural condition, and wealth that somehow falls to him later something superfluous, fit only for enjoyment and dissipation. When it is gone again, he gets along without it as well as before and has one care fewer. Then it happens as Shakespeare says:

The adage must be verified,

That beggars mounted run their horse to death.

(The proverb must be proved true: a beggar put on horseback rides his animal to death.)

Henry VI. P. 3. A. 1.

To this, admittedly, is added that such people carry, less in their heads than in their hearts, a firm and excessive confidence partly in fate and partly in their own resources, which have already helped them out of want and poverty. They therefore do not consider its depths bottomless, as those born rich may do, but think that on touching bottom one is lifted up again.—This human peculiarity also explains why women who were poor girls are very often more demanding and extravagant than those who brought a rich dowry: wealthy girls generally bring not only property but also more zeal, indeed an inherited impulse, to preserve it than poor girls do. Anyone wishing to maintain the contrary, however, finds an authority in Ariosto's first Satire; Dr. Johnson, on the other hand, agrees with my opinion: *A woman of fortune being used to the handling of mon-*

ey, spends it judiciously: but a woman who gets the command of money for the first time upon her marriage, has such a gust in spending it, that she throws it away with great profusion. (S. Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ann. 1776, aetat. 67.)

In any case, I would advise someone marrying a poor girl to leave her not the capital but merely an annuity, and especially to ensure that the children's property does not fall into her hands.

I do not believe I am doing anything unworthy of my pen in recommending care here for the preservation of acquired and inherited property. To possess from the outset enough to live comfortably in true independence—that is, without working—even if only for oneself and without a family, is a priceless advantage. It is exemption and immunity from the neediness and toil attached to human life, emancipation from universal forced labor, the natural lot of earth's child. Only with this favor of fate is one born truly free: only so is one properly *one's own master*, lord of one's time and powers, able to say every morning: "The day is mine." For this very reason, the difference between someone with an income of a thousand thalers and someone with an income of a hundred thousand is infinitely smaller than the difference between the first and someone who has nothing. Inherited property, however, attains its highest value when it falls to someone endowed with intellectual powers of a higher kind and pursuing endeavors incompatible with earning a living. Fate has then endowed him twice over, and he can now live for his genius; he will repay his debt to humanity a hundredfold by achieving what no other could and producing something that benefits humanity as a whole, perhaps even brings it honor. Another, in such a favored position, will earn humanity's gratitude through philanthropic endeavors. But anyone who does none of these things, even to some extent or experimentally, and does not even open up the possibility of advancing a field of knowledge by thoroughly learning it, is, with inherited property, a mere idler and contemptible. Nor will he be happy: exemption from want delivers him into the hands of the other pole of human misery, boredom, which torments him so much that he would be far happier if want had given him occupation. This very boredom will readily tempt him into extrava-

gances that deprive him of an advantage he did not deserve. Countless people are indeed in need only because, when they had money, they spent it merely to procure momentary relief from the boredom weighing upon them.

It is quite otherwise, however, when the aim is to rise high in state service, where favor, friends, and connections must be acquired to obtain advancement through them, step by step, perhaps even to the highest positions. Here it is probably better, at bottom, to have been thrust into the world without any property at all. Especially for someone who is not noble but has some talent, being a thoroughly poor devil will be a real advantage and recommendation. For what everyone seeks and loves most, even in mere conversation and all the more in service, is another's inferiority. Only a poor devil is convinced and permeated, to the degree required here, by his complete, profound, decided inferiority in every respect and his utter insignificance and worthlessness. Only he therefore bows often and persistently enough, and only his bows reach a full 90°; only he lets everything be done to him and smiles at it; only he recognizes the utter worthlessness of merit; only he publicly proclaims, at the top of his voice or in large print, the literary bungs of those above him or otherwise influential to be masterpieces; only he knows how to beg. Consequently he alone can, in good time—that is, in youth—become an initiate into the hidden truth Goethe revealed to us in these words:

“Let no one complain

Of what is base:

For it is what holds power,

Whatever they may tell you.”

W. O. Divan.

Someone who has the means to live from the outset, by contrast, will generally prove unruly: he is accustomed to going *with his head held high*, has not learned all those arts, and perhaps even relies defiantly on some talents whose inadequacy beside *mediocrity and crawling servility* he ought rather to understand. He may finally even notice the inferiority of those set above him; and when actual indignities come, he balks or shies. That is no way to make one's way in the world. Instead he may at last come to say with the audacious

Voltaire: *We have only two days to live: it is not worth spending them crawling before contemptible scoundrels.*—Unfortunately, to remark in passing, *contemptible scoundrel* is a predicate for which this world supplies devilishly many subjects. Thus one sees that Juvenal's
Those whose abilities are blocked by
Straitened means at home do not easily rise,
applies more to the careers of virtuosos than to those of worldly people.
I have not included wife and children among *what a person has*, since it is rather they who have him. Friends might more readily be counted here; but even here the possessor must be, in equal measure, the other's possession.

Chapter 4



What a Person Represents.

This—our existence in the opinions of others—is generally valued far too highly, owing to a peculiar weakness of our nature, although the slightest reflection could teach us that in itself it is inessential to our happiness. It is therefore scarcely explicable how inwardly delighted everyone becomes whenever he notices signs of others' favorable opinions and his vanity is flattered in any way. As surely as a cat purrs when stroked, sweet delight paints itself on the face of a person praised in the field of his pretensions, even if the praise is palpably false. Signs of others' approval often console him for actual misfortune or for the scantiness with which the two chief sources of happiness discussed so far flow for him. Conversely, it is astonishing how unfailingly every injury to his ambition, in whatever sense, degree, or relationship—every slight, neglect, or disregard—wounds him and often hurts him deeply. Insofar as the sense of honor rests on this quality, it may have beneficial consequences for many people's good conduct as a substitute for morality. But on a person's own *happiness*, and especially on the peace of mind and independence so essential to it, its influence is more disturbing and harmful than helpful. From our standpoint, therefore, it is advisable to set limits to it and, through proper reflection and a correct appraisal of the value of goods, to moderate as far as possible this great sen-

sitivity to others' opinions, both when it is flattered and when it is hurt; for both hang by the same thread. Otherwise one remains the slave of others' opinions and judgments:

So light, so small is what casts down and restores

The heart that hungers for praise.

A correct estimate of the worth of what we are in and *for ourselves*, compared with what we are merely in the eyes of *others*, will therefore contribute greatly to our happiness. To the former belongs the entire filling of the time of our own existence, its inward content, and thus all the goods we have considered under the headings "what a person is" and "what a person has." For the place in which all this has its sphere of action is our own consciousness. The place of what we are *for others*, by contrast, is their consciousness: the representation under which we appear in it, together with the concepts applied to that representation[D]. This is something that does not exist for us directly at all, but only indirectly, insofar as it determines others' behavior toward us. Even this behavior properly matters only insofar as it influences something capable of modifying what we are *in and for ourselves*. Otherwise, what occurs in another's consciousness is, as such, indifferent to us. We too will gradually become indifferent to it once we gain sufficient knowledge of the superficiality and futility of thoughts, the narrowness of concepts, the pettiness of dispositions, the perversity of opinions, and the number of errors in the great majority of minds; and once we learn from our own experience with what contempt anyone is sometimes spoken of as soon as he need not be feared or it is thought the words will not reach his ears—especially after hearing half a dozen blockheads speak disparagingly of the greatest man. We shall then see that whoever sets great store by people's opinions pays them too much honor.

[D] The highest classes, in their brilliance, splendor, pomp, glory, and display of every kind, can say: our happiness lies wholly outside ourselves; its place is in the heads of others.

In any case, someone who does not find happiness in the two classes of goods already discussed but must seek it in this third is dependent on a meager resource: not what he really is, but what he is in another's representation. For

our animal nature is in general the basis of our being, and consequently of our happiness. Health is therefore the most essential thing for our welfare; next come the means of maintaining ourselves, and thus a livelihood free from care. Honor, brilliance, rank, and fame, however highly some may value them, cannot compete with or replace those essential goods; rather, if necessary, they would be surrendered for them without hesitation. It will therefore contribute to our happiness if we acquire in good time the simple insight that everyone lives first and actually in his own skin, not in others' opinions; consequently our actual, personal condition, as determined by health, temperament, abilities, income, wife, child, friends, place of residence, and so forth, is a hundred times more important to our happiness than whatever others please to make of us. The opposite delusion makes us unhappy. When someone cries emphatically, "Honor stands above life itself," this really means: "Existence and well-being are nothing; what others think of us is what matters." At most the saying can count as a hyperbole founded on the prosaic truth that honor—that is, people's opinion of us—is often indispensable to making our way and maintaining ourselves among them; I shall return to this later. But when we see how almost everything people tirelessly pursue throughout life, with restless effort and amid a thousand dangers and hardships, ultimately aims at raising them in others' opinion—not merely offices, titles, and decorations, but wealth and even learning[E] and art being pursued basically and chiefly for this reason, with others' greater respect as the final goal—this unfortunately proves only the magnitude of human folly. To place far too much value on others' opinion is a universally prevailing delusion, whether rooted in our nature itself or arising through society and civilization. In any case, it exerts a wholly excessive influence on all our actions and omissions, hostile to our happiness. We can trace it from its manifestation in anxious, slavish regard for *what will people say?* to the point where it drives Virginius's dagger into his daughter's heart, or tempts a person to sacrifice peace, wealth, health, even life, for posthumous fame. This delusion certainly offers a convenient handle to anyone who must govern people or otherwise direct them; hence the instruction to keep the sense of honor lively and sharpen it occupies a chief place in every art of training human

beings. But concerning a person's own happiness, our object here, the matter stands quite differently: we must rather warn against placing too much value on others' opinions. If, as daily experience teaches, this nevertheless happens; if most people set the highest value precisely on others' opinions of them and care more for these than for what, because it occurs in *their own consciousness*, exists immediately for them; if, thus reversing the natural order, the former seems the real, the latter merely the ideal part of their existence; if they therefore make the derivative and secondary their chief concern, caring more for the image of their being in others' heads than for that being itself—then this immediate valuation of what does not exist for us immediately at all is the folly called *vanity*, *vanitas*, to designate the emptiness and lack of substance of such striving. It is also easy to see from the foregoing that, like avarice, it belongs to forgetting the end in favor of the means.

[E] *Your knowledge is nothing unless another knows that you know it.*

Indeed, the value we place on others' opinions and our constant concern with them generally exceed almost every rational purpose, so that they can be regarded as a kind of universally widespread, or rather inborn, mania. In almost everything we do or leave undone, others' opinions are considered before nearly anything else; on close examination, we shall see almost half of all the troubles and anxieties we have ever felt arise from concern about them. For this underlies all our self-esteem, so often wounded because it is so morbidly sensitive, all our vanities and pretensions, and also our display and self-importance. Without this concern and craving, luxury would scarcely amount to a tenth of what it is. Every kind of pride, *point of honor* and *punctiliousness*, however different its kind and sphere, rests on it—and what sacrifices it often demands! It appears already in children, then at every age, though most strongly in later life, when the capacity for sensual pleasures dries up and vanity and arrogance have only avarice left to share their rule. It can be observed most clearly among the French, in whom it is thoroughly endemic, often venting itself in the most tasteless ambition, ridiculous national vanity, and shameless boasting; thus their striving defeats itself, having made them the laughingstock of other nations, and *the great nation* has become a nickname of mockery. To illustrate

more particularly the perversity of this excessive concern with others' opinions, a truly superlative example of that folly rooted in human nature may be given here, unusually favored in its illumination by the coincidence of circumstances with the appropriate character. It allows the full strength of this most peculiar motive to be measured. The following passage is taken from the *Times* of March 31, 1846, in its detailed report of the execution just carried out of *Thomas Wix*, a journeyman who had murdered his master for revenge: "On the morning appointed for his execution the reverend prison chaplain came to him early. But *Wix*, though behaving calmly, showed no interest in his exhortations: his sole concern was to succeed in bearing himself with great bravado before the spectators of his shameful end.— — —And in this he succeeded. In the courtyard he had to cross to reach the gallows erected immediately beside the prison, he said, 'Well then, as Doctor Dodd said, I shall soon know the great secret!' Although his arms were bound, he climbed the ladder to the scaffold without the slightest assistance. On reaching it he bowed to the spectators to right and left, and these bows were answered and rewarded with the assembled crowd's thunderous applause, and so forth."—This is a magnificent specimen of ambition: with death in its most terrible form before one's eyes, and eternity behind it, to have no other concern than the impression made on the hastily gathered crowd of gawkers and the opinion one will leave in their heads!—Yet *Lecomte*, executed in France that same year for attempted regicide, was likewise chiefly annoyed at his trial that he could not appear before the Chamber of Peers in respectable clothing; even at his execution a principal vexation was that he had not been allowed to shave beforehand. That things were no different in former times appears from what *Mateo Aleman* relates in the introduction (*declaracion*) prefixed to his famous novel *Guzman de Alfarache*: many deluded criminals take the last hours, which they ought to devote exclusively to the salvation of their souls, away from this purpose to compose and memorize a little sermon they intend to deliver on the gallows ladder.—Yet we ourselves can see our reflection in such traits, for colossal cases everywhere give the clearest illustration. Perhaps in most cases, all our worrying, troubling, fretting, vexation,

anxiety, exertion, and so forth concern others' opinions in reality, and are just as absurd as those of these poor sinners. Our envy and hatred spring no less largely from that same root.

Plainly, hardly anything could contribute so much to our happiness, which rests overwhelmingly on peace of mind and contentment, as restricting and reducing this motive to a rationally justifiable measure—perhaps a fiftieth of its present strength—and thus drawing this constantly tormenting thorn from our flesh. Yet this is very difficult, for we are dealing with a natural and inborn perversity. *Even the wise shed the desire for glory last*, says Tacitus (hist. VI, 6). The only way to rid ourselves of this universal folly would be to recognize it clearly as such, and for this purpose to make clear to ourselves how utterly false, perverse, erroneous, and absurd most opinions in people's heads tend to be, and therefore how unworthy of attention in themselves; then how little actual influence others' opinions can have upon us in most things and cases; further, how generally unfavorable they usually are, so that almost anyone would fret himself ill if he heard everything said about him and the tone in which he is discussed; finally, that even honor itself is really only of indirect, not immediate, value, and so on. If we succeeded in such a conversion from universal folly, the result would be an incredibly great increase of peace of mind and cheerfulness, as well as a firmer and more confident bearing, and behavior more entirely unselfconscious and natural. The exceedingly beneficial influence of a retired way of life on our peace of mind rests chiefly on its withdrawing us from constantly living before others' eyes, and consequently from continual consideration of their possible opinions, thus restoring us to ourselves. We would likewise escape a great deal of actual misfortune into which only that purely ideal striving—or more correctly, that ruinous folly—draws us, retain far more care for substantial goods, and enjoy these with less disturbance. But, as I have said, noble things are difficult.

The folly of our nature described here produces chiefly three offspring: ambition, vanity, and pride. The difference between the last two rests on *pride* being an already established conviction of one's own superior worth in some respect, whereas *vanity* is the wish to awaken such a conviction in others, usually

accompanied by the secret hope of consequently making it one's own as well. Pride is therefore high self-esteem originating *within*, and thus direct; vanity is the effort to obtain such esteem *from outside*, and thus indirectly. Accordingly vanity makes us talkative, pride silent. But the vain person should know that the high opinion of others he seeks can be obtained much more easily and surely through persistent silence than through speech, even if he had the finest things to say.—One cannot be proud simply by wishing to be; at most one can wish to affect pride, but will soon fall out of this assumed role, as out of any other. For only a firm, inward, unshakable conviction of superior advantages and special worth makes one truly proud. This conviction may be mistaken, or rest merely on external and conventional advantages; that does not injure pride, provided the conviction really and seriously exists. Since pride is rooted in *conviction*, it is, like all knowledge, not subject to our *choice*. Its worst enemy—I mean its greatest obstacle—is vanity, which courts others' approval in order to found its own high opinion of itself upon it, whereas being already quite firmly established in that opinion is the prerequisite of pride.

However generally pride is blamed and denounced, I suspect this has chiefly originated with those who have nothing to be proud of. In the face of most people's insolence and brazen stupidity, anyone possessing advantages of any kind does well to keep them in view himself, so that they do not fall entirely into oblivion. For someone who good-naturedly ignores them and treats those people as though he were entirely their equal will immediately and in all innocence be taken for just that. I would recommend this especially to those whose advantages are of the highest kind—that is, real and thus purely personal—since these, unlike decorations and titles, are not recalled to mind at every moment through an impression on the senses; otherwise they will often enough see *the pig instructing Minerva* exemplified. “Joke with the slave, and soon he will show you his backside” is an excellent Arabic proverb, and Horace's *assume the pride earned by merit* is not to be rejected. The virtue of modesty, however, is a considerable invention for the scoundrels: according to

it, everyone must speak of himself as though he too were one of them, which levels things splendidly, making it appear as though there were nothing but scoundrels at all.

The cheapest kind of pride, however, is national pride. For it betrays in its possessor a lack of *individual* qualities of which he could be proud; otherwise he would not reach for what he shares with so many millions. Someone possessing significant personal advantages will rather recognize most clearly the faults of his own nation, since he has them constantly before his eyes. But every wretched fool who has nothing in the world to be proud of seizes the last resort of taking pride in the nation to which he happens to belong. In this he finds consolation and is now gratefully ready to defend all its faults and follies with fists and feet. Thus among fifty Englishmen one will scarcely find more than one who agrees when the stupid and degrading bigotry of his nation is spoken of with due contempt; but that one is generally a man of intelligence.—The Germans are free of national pride and thereby give evidence of the honesty for which they are praised. Evidence of the contrary is given by those among them who profess and ridiculously affect such pride, as is chiefly done by the “German brothers” and democrats who flatter the people to seduce them. The Germans are indeed said to have invented gunpowder; I cannot, however, subscribe to this opinion. And Lichtenberg asks: “Why does someone who is not German rarely pretend to be German, but generally, when he wants to pass himself off as something, pretends to be French or English?” Individuality, moreover, far outweighs nationality and deserves a thousand times more consideration in any given person. Since national character speaks of the multitude, one can never honestly credit it with much good. Rather, human narrowness, perversity, and wickedness appear in a different form in each country, and this is called national character. Disgusted with *one*, we praise another until we have fared just the same with it.—Every nation mocks the other, and all are right.

The subject of this chapter, then—what we *represent* in the world, what we are in the eyes of others—can, as already observed above, be divided into *honor*, *rank*, and *fame*.

Rank, however important in the eyes of the crowd and the philistines, and however useful in the workings of the machinery of state, can for our purpose be dealt with in a few words. It is a conventional, and thus really a simulated, value: its effect is simulated respect, and the whole is a comedy for the crowd.—Decorations are bills of exchange drawn on public opinion: their value rests on the issuer's credit. Nevertheless, quite apart from the great sums they save the state as substitutes for monetary rewards, they are an entirely appropriate institution, provided they are distributed with insight and justice. For the crowd has eyes and ears, but not much more: especially precious little judgment, and even little memory. Some merits lie entirely outside its sphere of understanding; others it understands and applauds when they occur, but soon forgets afterward. I therefore find it quite fitting that a cross or star should call out to the multitude always and everywhere: "This man is not your equal: he has merits!" But unjust, undiscerning, or excessive distribution robs decorations of this value; a prince should therefore be as cautious in awarding them as a merchant in signing bills. The inscription *for merit* on a cross is a pleonasm: every decoration should be *for merit*—*that goes without saying*.—

The discussion of *honor* is much more difficult and extensive than that of rank. First we should define it. If for this purpose I were to say that honor is outward conscience and conscience inward honor, this might please some people, but would be a brilliant rather than a clear and thorough explanation. I therefore say: objectively, honor is others' opinion of our worth; subjectively, our fear of that opinion. In the latter capacity it often has a very salutary, though by no means purely moral, effect in the man of honor.

The root and origin of the feeling for honor and shame dwelling in every person not wholly corrupt, and of the high value assigned to honor, lie in the following. Alone, a human being can do very little and is an abandoned Robinson Crusoe; only in community with others is he and can he do much. He becomes aware of this relation as soon as his consciousness begins to develop at all, and at once there arises in him the effort to be regarded as a suitable member of human society: one capable of contributing *his proper share*, and thereby entitled to partake in the advantages of human community. He is such a member

by performing, first, what is demanded and expected of everyone everywhere, and then what is demanded and expected of him in the particular position he has assumed. But just as soon he recognizes that what matters here is not being so in his own opinion but in that of others. Hence his eager striving for others' favorable *opinion* and the high value he sets on it. Both appear with the originality of an inborn feeling, called a sense of honor and, according to circumstances, a sense of shame (*modesty*). This reddens his cheeks as soon as he believes he must suddenly lose standing in others' opinion, even when he knows himself innocent, and even when the failing being disclosed concerns only a relative obligation voluntarily assumed. Conversely, nothing strengthens his courage for life more than gaining or renewing the certainty of others' favorable opinion, because it promises him the protection and help of everyone's united powers, an infinitely greater defensive wall against life's evils than his own.

The various relations in which a person can stand to others, and in which they must have confidence in him and therefore a certain good opinion of him, give rise to several *kinds of honor*. These relations are chiefly mine and yours, then the performance of those who undertake obligations, and finally sexual relations. Civic honor, professional honor, and sexual honor correspond to them, each in turn having subdivisions.

Civic honor has the widest sphere. It consists in the presumption that we respect everyone's rights unconditionally and will therefore never use unjust or legally forbidden means to our own advantage. It is the condition of participation in all peaceful dealings. It is lost through a single action openly and markedly contrary to it, and consequently through every criminal punishment, though only on the assumption that the punishment is just. Honor, however, always rests ultimately on conviction of the immutability of moral character, by virtue of which a single bad action guarantees the same moral constitution in all subsequent ones whenever similar circumstances arise. The English expression *character* for reputation, standing, and honor also attests this. Precisely for this reason, lost honor cannot be restored unless its loss rested on deception, such as slander or a false appearance. Accordingly there are laws

against slander, defamatory writings, and insults; for an insult, mere abuse, is summary slander without giving grounds. This could be aptly expressed in Greek: abuse is abbreviated slander—though the phrase occurs nowhere. Certainly, someone who resorts to abuse thereby shows he has nothing actual and true to bring against the other; otherwise he would give it as the premises and confidently leave the conclusion to his listeners. Instead he gives the conclusion and owes the premises, relying on the presumption that he does so merely for convenient brevity.—Civic honor takes its name from the citizen class, but its validity extends to every class without distinction, not excluding even the highest. No one can dispense with it; it is a thoroughly serious matter that everyone should beware of taking lightly. Whoever breaks faith has lost trust and credit forever, whatever he does and whoever he may be; the bitter fruits of this loss will not fail to appear.

Honor has in a certain sense a *negative* character, in contrast to fame, which has a *positive* one. For honor is not an opinion concerning special qualities belonging to this individual alone, but only concerning those to be presumed as a rule, which he too should not lack. It thus says only that the individual makes no exception, while fame says that he does. Fame must therefore first be acquired; honor merely need not be lost. Accordingly, lack of fame is obscurity, something negative; lack of honor is disgrace, something positive.—This negativity must not, however, be confused with passivity: honor has a thoroughly active character. It proceeds solely from its *subject*, rests on *his* actions and omissions, not on what others do or what befalls him; it is therefore among the things within our power. This, as we shall soon see, distinguishes true honor from chivalric or counterfeit honor. Only through slander is an attack on honor possible from outside; the sole remedy is refutation with publicity matching the slander's, and exposure of the slanderer.

Respect for age seems to rest on the fact that young people's honor is indeed presumed but not yet tested, and therefore really exists on credit. In older people, however, life must have shown whether they could maintain their honor through their conduct. Neither years in themselves, which animals too attain, some in much greater number, nor experience as mere closer knowledge of the

world's course is sufficient ground for the respect of the young for the old demanded everywhere. The mere weakness of advanced age would entitle it more to consideration than respect. Remarkably, however, a certain reverence for white hair is inborn in human beings, and thus truly instinctive. Wrinkles, an incomparably surer sign of age, arouse no such reverence: no one ever speaks of venerable wrinkles, but always of venerable white hair.

Honor's value is only indirect. For, as explained at the opening of this chapter, others' opinion of us can have value for us only insofar as it determines, or may occasionally determine, their actions toward us. This, however, is the case as long as we live with or among people. In a civilized condition we owe security and property solely to society; in all undertakings we also need others, and they must have confidence in us to deal with us. Their opinion of us is therefore of high, though always only indirect, value; I cannot concede it an immediate one. *Cicero* agrees: *As for a good reputation, Chrysippus and Diogenes used to say that, apart from its usefulness, one should not even extend a finger for its sake. With them I emphatically agree.* (fin. III, 17.) *Helvétius* likewise gives an extensive exposition of this truth in his masterpiece, *On the Mind* (Disc. III, ch. 13), whose result is: *we love esteem not for esteem itself, but solely for the advantages it brings.* Since the means cannot be worth more than the end, the grand saying "honor stands above life" is, as already said, a hyperbole.

So much for civic honor. *Professional honor* is others' general opinion that a man holding an office really possesses all the qualities required for it and fulfills his official duties punctually in every case. The greater and more important a man's sphere of activity in the state—that is, the higher and more influential his post—the greater must be the opinion of the intellectual abilities and moral qualities fitting him for it. He consequently possesses a correspondingly higher degree of honor, expressed in titles, decorations, and so forth, and in others' deferential behavior toward him. By this same measure, station generally determines the particular degree of honor, though modified by the multitude's capacity to judge that station's importance. Yet someone with particular obligations that he fulfills is always accorded more honor than the ordinary citizen, whose honor rests chiefly on negative qualities.

Professional honor further requires an officeholder to maintain respect for the office itself, for the sake of colleagues and successors, precisely through that punctual fulfillment of duties, and also by not leaving unpunished attacks on the office itself or on himself insofar as he holds it: statements, that is, that he does not fulfill its duties punctually, or that the office itself does not serve the common good. Through legal punishment he must prove those attacks unjust. Subdivisions of professional honor include that of the civil servant, physician, advocate, every public teacher, indeed every graduate—in short, everyone publicly declared qualified for a certain intellectual performance and who has thereby undertaken it: in a word, the honor of all who publicly undertake obligations, as such. Hence true *military honor* belongs here too: someone who has undertaken to defend the common fatherland must really possess the necessary qualities, above all courage, bravery, and strength, and be seriously ready to defend his country to the death and never, for anything in the world, abandon the flag to which he has once sworn allegiance.—I have taken *professional honor* here in a broader sense than usual, where it means the respect citizens owe the office itself.

Sexual honor seems to me to require closer examination and a tracing of its principles to their root, which will also confirm that all honor ultimately rests on considerations of utility. Sexual honor divides by its nature into women's and men's honor, and on both sides is a well-understood *corporate solidarity*. The former is by far the more important, because in a woman's life the sexual relation is the chief matter.—*Female honor*, then, is the general opinion that an unmarried girl has given herself to no man, and a wife only to the man she married. This opinion's importance rests on the following. The female sex demands and expects everything from the male: everything it wishes and needs. The male sex demands immediately and directly only one thing from the female. An arrangement therefore had to be made whereby the male sex could obtain that one thing from the female only by undertaking care for everything, and also for the children arising from the union. The welfare of the whole female sex rests on this arrangement. To enforce it, the female sex must necessarily hold together and show *corporate solidarity*. It then stands as a whole, in closed

ranks, against the entire male sex, which through its superior bodily and intellectual powers naturally possesses all earthly goods, as against a common enemy who must be defeated and conquered, so that by possessing him it may gain possession of earthly goods. To this end the maxim of honor of the whole female sex is that all intercourse outside marriage must be absolutely denied to the male, so that each individual man is compelled to marry—a kind of capitulation—and thereby the whole female sex is provided for. But this purpose can be fully achieved only by strict observance of that maxim; hence the whole female sex, with true *corporate solidarity*, watches over its maintenance among all its members. Accordingly every girl who, through intercourse outside marriage, has betrayed the whole female sex, whose welfare would be undermined if this conduct became general, is cast out by it and branded with shame: she has lost her honor. No woman may associate with her anymore; she is shunned like someone plague-stricken. The adulteress meets the same fate, because she has not kept the capitulation entered into by her husband; such an example deters men from entering it, while the salvation of the whole female sex rests upon it. Beyond this, however, through the gross breach of faith and deceit in her act, the adulteress loses civic honor together with sexual honor. Hence people say, with an excusing expression, “a fallen girl,” but not “a fallen wife”; and the seducer can make the former honorable again through marriage, but the adulterer cannot do the same for the latter after her divorce.—If, following this clear insight, we recognize a beneficial, indeed necessary, but well-calculated and interest-based *corporate solidarity* as the foundation of the principle of female honor, we can assign it the greatest importance for female existence and thus a great relative value, but no absolute value extending beyond life and its purposes and therefore to be bought with life itself. We cannot accordingly applaud the extravagant deeds of Lucretia and Virginius, degenerating into tragic farces. Precisely for this reason the ending of Emilia Galotti is so outrageous that one leaves the theater entirely out of temper. Conversely, despite sexual honor, one cannot help sympathizing with Klärchen in Egmont. This carrying of the principle of female honor to extremes belongs, like so much else, to forgetting the end in favor of the means. Such extravagance imputes an abso-

lute value to sexual honor, whereas more than any other honor it has merely a relative value—indeed, one might say merely a conventional one, on learning from *Thomasius, On Concubinage*, how in almost all countries and ages until the Lutheran Reformation concubinage was a legally permitted and recognized relation in which the concubine remained honorable, not to mention Mylitta in Babylon (Herodot I, 199), and so forth. There are also certainly civil circumstances that make the external form of marriage impossible, especially in Catholic countries, where divorce does not occur; and everywhere for ruling princes, who in my opinion act far more morally in keeping a mistress than in entering a morganatic marriage. Its descendants, should the legitimate line die out, might one day advance claims, so that such a marriage creates the possibility of civil war, however remote. Moreover, a morganatic marriage of this kind—really a marriage contracted in defiance of all outward circumstances—is ultimately a concession to women and priests, two classes to whom one should be as wary as possible of conceding anything. Further, everyone in the country can marry the woman of his choice except one, who is deprived of this natural right: that poor man is the prince. His hand belongs to the country and is bestowed according to reasons of state, that is, the country's welfare. Yet he is a human being too and wishes for once to follow his heart's inclination. It is therefore as unjust and ungrateful as it is philistine to forbid or reproach a prince for keeping a mistress—provided, of course, that she is allowed no influence over government. Such a mistress, on her side, is in a sense an exceptional person regarding sexual honor, exempt from the general rule: she has given herself only to one man, who loved her and whom she loved, but could never marry.—In general, however, the many bloody sacrifices made to the principle of female honor—in infanticide and mothers' suicide—testify that its origin is not purely natural. Certainly, a girl who gives herself illicitly thereby breaks faith with her whole sex; but this faith was only tacitly assumed, not sworn. And since, in the ordinary case, her own advantage suffers most directly, her folly is infinitely greater than her wickedness.

Men's sexual honor is called forth by women's as the opposing *corporate solidarity*. It demands that everyone who has entered marriage, that capitulation so favorable to the other side, now ensure that it is kept toward him, lest even this pact lose its firmness through lax observance and men, while giving everything, not even be assured of the one thing they have bargained for: exclusive possession of the woman. Accordingly a man's honor demands that he avenge his wife's adultery and punish it, at least by separating from her. If he knowingly tolerates it, the community of men brands him with shame; yet this is far less thoroughgoing than the disgrace striking a woman through loss of sexual honor, being rather only *a blemish of a lesser kind*. For in a man's case the sexual relation is subordinate, since he stands in many other, more important relations. The two great dramatic poets of modern times each twice made this male honor their subject: Shakespeare in *Othello* and *The Winter's Tale*, Calderón in *The Physician of His Honor* (the physician of his honor) and *Secret Vengeance for Secret Injury* (secret revenge for secret disgrace). This honor, moreover, demands only the punishment of the wife, not of her lover, which is merely *a work beyond obligation*: this confirms its stated origin in the *corporate solidarity* of men.—

Honor, as I have so far considered it in its kinds and principles, is found universally valid among all peoples and in all ages, though certain local and temporary modifications of the principles of women's honor can be shown. There is, however, another kind of honor entirely different from that universally valid one, of which neither Greeks nor Romans had any conception, and of which the Chinese, Hindus, and Muslims know nothing to this day. It arose only in the Middle Ages and became native only to Christian Europe, and even there only among an exceedingly small fraction of the population: the higher classes of society and those who imitate them. This is *chivalric honor*, or *the point of honor*. Since its principles differ entirely from those of the honor discussed so far, and partly even oppose them—the former making the *honorable man*, the latter the *man of honor*—I will set out its principles separately here as a code, or mirror of chivalric honor.

¹ Honor consists *not* in others' opinion of our worth, but solely in the *expressions* of such an opinion, regardless of whether the expressed opinion really exists, much less whether it has grounds. Thus others may, as a result of our conduct, entertain the worst opinion of us and despise us as much as they please: as long as no one presumes to express it aloud, it does no harm whatever to our honor. Conversely, even if our qualities and actions compel everyone to esteem us very highly—for this is not at their discretion—someone, even the worst and stupidest, need only express contempt for us, and at once our honor is injured, indeed lost forever unless restored.—Superfluous proof that what matters is not others' *opinion* but solely its *expression* lies in the fact that derogatory remarks can be *withdrawn*, and if necessary apologized for, whereupon it is as though they had never occurred. Whether the opinion from which they sprang has likewise changed, and why it should have, is immaterial: only the expression is annulled, and then all is well. The aim here is therefore not to deserve respect, but to extort it.

² A man's honor rests not on what he *does*, but on what he *suffers*, what befalls him. If, according to the principles of the universally valid honor discussed first, honor depends solely on what *he himself* says or does, chivalric honor, by contrast, depends on what someone else says or does. It therefore lies in everyone's hand, indeed hangs on everyone's tongue-tip, and may be lost forever at any moment if that person reaches for it, unless the victim seizes it back by a restorative process soon to be mentioned. This can occur, however, only at the risk of his life, health, freedom, property, and peace of mind. Accordingly a man's conduct may be the most upright and noble, his disposition the purest, his mind the most eminent, yet his honor can be lost at any moment whenever anyone chooses to *insult* him—provided only that the insulter has not yet broken these laws of honor, though otherwise he may be the most worthless scoundrel, the stupidest brute, an idler, gambler, debtor, in short, someone not worth that man's glance. Indeed, it will generally be precisely someone of this sort who chooses to do it, because, as *Seneca* rightly remarks, *the more contemptible and ridiculous someone is, the more unbridled his tongue* (de constan-

tia, 11). Such a person will also be most easily provoked against someone like the first man described, because opposites hate one another, and the sight of superior advantages generally produces the silent fury of worthlessness. Hence Goethe says:

Why complain about enemies?
Could those ever become friends
To whom the being that you are
Is silently an eternal reproach?

W. O. Divan.

We see how very much precisely the people of the latter kind owe to the principle of honor, since it levels them with those who would otherwise be unattainable to them in every respect.—If such a person has now insulted someone, that is, attributed a bad quality to him, this counts provisionally as an objectively true and well-founded judgment, a legally valid decree; indeed, it remains true and valid for all future time unless promptly washed out with blood. The insulted person remains, in the eyes of all “people of honor,” what the insulter—even the lowest of all earthly beings—has called him, for he has, as the *technical term* has it, “let it rest upon him.” Accordingly the “people of honor” will now utterly despise him and flee him like a plague-stricken person: for example, loudly and publicly refuse to enter a gathering to which he is admitted, and so forth.—I believe I can securely trace the origin of this wise fundamental view to the fact that, according to C. G. von Wächter’s “Beiträge zur deutschen Geschichte, besonders des deutschen Strafrechts” 1845, in the Middle Ages down to the fifteenth century, in criminal proceedings it was not the accuser who had to prove guilt, but the accused who had to prove innocence. This could be done through an oath of purgation, for which he also needed oath-helpers (*fellow swearers*) who swore they were convinced he was incapable of perjury. If he had none, or if the accuser refused to accept them, an ordeal ensued, usually consisting in single combat. For the accused was now a “tainted man” and had to clear himself. Here we see the origin of the concept of being tainted and of the whole course of events still occurring among “people of honor” today, only with the oath omitted. Here too is the explanation of the oblig-

atory lofty indignation with which “people of honor” receive the accusation of lying and demand bloody revenge for it. Given the everyday frequency of lies, this seems very strange, but has grown into a deeply rooted superstition, especially in England. (Indeed, anyone threatening to punish the accusation of lying with death ought never to have lied in his life.) In those medieval criminal proceedings, the shorter form was that the accused answered the accuser, “You are lying,” whereupon an ordeal was immediately decreed. Hence under the chivalric code of honor, an accusation of lying must immediately be followed by an appeal to arms.—So much for verbal abuse. There is, however, something even worse, something so appalling that I must ask the “people of honor” to pardon its mere mention in this code of chivalric honor. I know the mere thought makes their skin shudder and their hair stand on end, for it is the *supreme evil*, the greatest evil in the world, worse than death and damnation. Someone may, *horrible to relate*, give another a slap or blow. This is a terrible event, bringing about so complete a death of honor that while all other injuries to honor can be healed by bloodletting, this one requires an outright killing for its thorough cure.

- ³ Honor has nothing whatever to do with what a person may be in and for himself, with whether his moral constitution can ever change, or with any such pedantries. Rather, when injured or provisionally lost, it can, if one acts promptly, be restored quite soon and completely through a single universal remedy: the duel. If, however, the offender is not of the classes professing the chivalric code of honor, or has already once violated it, a sure operation can be performed—especially if the injury to honor was physical, but even if merely verbal—by stabbing him on the spot, if armed, or even an hour afterward; honor is then healed again. Otherwise, or if one wishes to avoid this step for fear of resulting inconveniences, or is merely uncertain whether the offender submits to the laws of chivalric honor, one has a palliative in the “advantage.” This consists in being noticeably ruder if he was rude; if verbal abuse will no longer suffice, one strikes. Here too there is a scale of saving honor: slaps are cured by blows with a stick, these by strokes with a hunting whip; even against

the latter, some recommend spitting as a proven remedy. Only if these means can no longer be applied in time must one absolutely proceed to bloody operations. This palliative method is really founded on the following maxim.

- ⁴ As being insulted is a disgrace, so insulting is an honor. Suppose truth, right, and reason are on my opponent's side, but I resort to abuse: they must all pack their bags, and right and honor are on my side. He, by contrast, has provisionally lost his honor until he restores it, not by right and reason but by shooting and stabbing. Rudeness is therefore a quality that in the matter of honor replaces or outweighs every other: the rudest person is always right. *Why say more?* Whatever stupidity, ill manners, or wickedness someone may have committed, an act of rudeness wipes it out as such and immediately legitimizes it. If, in a discussion or other conversation, someone shows more accurate knowledge of the matter, stricter love of truth, sounder judgment, greater understanding than we do, or generally displays intellectual advantages that cast us in the shade, we can instantly nullify all such superiorities and our own poverty exposed by them, and become superior ourselves instead, by becoming insulting and rude. For rudeness defeats every argument and eclipses all intelligence. Unless our opponent enters into it and replies with greater rudeness, drawing us into the noble contest of advantage, we remain victorious and honor is on our side: truth, knowledge, understanding, intelligence, and wit must pack their bags, driven from the field by divine rudeness. Hence "people of honor," as soon as someone expresses an opinion different from theirs, or merely shows more understanding than they can field, will immediately prepare to mount that warhorse; and if in a controversy they lack a counterargument, they seek a piece of rudeness, which performs the same service and is easier to find, and depart victorious. We already see here with what great justice the principle of honor is praised for refining the tone of society.—This maxim in turn rests on the following, the true fundamental maxim and soul of the entire code.
- ⁵ The supreme tribunal of right, to which in every disagreement concerning honor one may appeal from every other, is that of physical force—that is, animality. For every act of rudeness is really an appeal to animality: it declares the

contest of intellectual powers or moral right incompetent and substitutes the contest of physical powers. In the human species, defined by *Franklin* as a *tool-making animal* (an animal that makes tools), this is conducted in a duel with the weapons accordingly peculiar to it, and brings an irrevocable decision.— This fundamental maxim is, as everyone knows, designated in a word by *the right of the fist*, an expression analogous to *mad wisdom* and therefore ironic like it. Accordingly chivalric honor ought to be called fist-honor.—

- ⁶ Whereas above we found civic honor very scrupulous in matters of mine and yours, obligations undertaken, and one's given word, the code considered here displays the noblest liberality. Only *one* kind of word may not be broken: the word of honor, that is, the word accompanied by "on my honor!"—from which arises the presumption that every other word may be broken. Even when this word of honor is broken, honor can if necessary still be saved by the universal remedy, the duel, here fought against those who assert that we gave our word of honor.—Further, there is only *one* debt that must unconditionally be paid: a gambling debt, accordingly called a "debt of honor." We may cheat Jews and Christians out of every other debt without doing the slightest harm to chivalric honor.—

That this strange, barbarous, ridiculous code of honor did not arise from the essence of human nature or a sound view of human relations is apparent at first glance to anyone unprejudiced. It is further confirmed by its exceedingly restricted sphere of validity: exclusively Europe, and only since the Middle Ages; even there, only among nobility, military men, and their imitators. Neither Greeks nor Romans nor the highly cultivated Asian peoples of ancient and modern times know anything of this honor and its principles. They all know no honor other than the kind analyzed first. Among them all a man accordingly counts as what his conduct reveals him to be, not what some loose tongue pleases to say of him. Among them all, what someone says or does can certainly destroy his *own* honor, but never another's. Among them all a blow is simply a blow, which any horse or donkey can deliver more dangerously. According to circumstances it may provoke anger and perhaps be avenged on

the spot, but it has nothing to do with honor; no accounts are kept of blows and abusive words, together with “satisfaction” obtained or neglected. They do not fall short of the peoples of Christian Europe in bravery or contempt for life. Greeks and Romans were surely heroes enough, yet they knew nothing of *the point of honor*. Single combat among them was not the affair of a people’s nobles, but of hired gladiators, abandoned slaves, and condemned criminals set upon one another in alternation with wild animals for the people’s amusement. Gladiatorial games were abolished with the introduction of Christianity; in Christian times the duel took their place through the mediation of the ordeal. If the former was a cruel sacrifice to the general love of spectacle, the latter is a cruel sacrifice to general prejudice, offered not, like the former, by criminals, slaves, and prisoners, but by free and noble men.

A wealth of surviving incidents attests that this prejudice was entirely foreign to the ancients. When, for example, a Teutonic chieftain challenged *Marius* to single combat, that hero sent back word that if he was weary of life, he should hang himself; he did, however, offer him a retired gladiator to fight with (Freinsh. suppl. in Liv. lib. LXVIII, c. 12). In Plutarch (Them. 11) we read that the fleet commander Eurybiades, quarreling with Themistocles, raised his staff to strike him. We do not read that Themistocles drew his sword, but that he said: strike, then, but listen—“Strike me, but hear me.” How indignantly must the reader “of honor” miss the news that the Athenian officer corps at once declared it would no longer serve under such a Themistocles!—A modern French writer therefore says quite correctly: *If anyone took it into his head to say that Demosthenes was a man of honor, people would smile in pity;— —Cicero was not a man of honor either.* (Soirées littéraires, par C. Durand. Rouen 1828. Vol. 2. p. 300.) Further, Plato’s passage (de leg. IX, the last 6 pages, likewise XI p. 131 Bip.) on assault, that is, mistreatment, sufficiently shows that the ancients had no notion of the chivalric point of honor in such matters. *Socrates* was often physically mistreated as a result of his frequent disputations, and bore it calmly. Once, when kicked, he took it patiently and said to someone surprised at this: “If a donkey had kicked me, would I sue it?”—(Diog. Laert. II, 21.) On another occasion, someone said to him, “Does that man not insult and

abuse you?" His answer was: "No, for what he says does not fit me" (ibid. 36). —Stobaeus (Florileg., ed. Gaisford, Vol. I, p. 327-330) preserved a long passage from *Musonius*, showing how the ancients regarded insults: they knew no satisfaction except through the courts, and wise men disdained even this. That the ancients knew no satisfaction for a slap except legal redress is clear from Plato's *Gorgias* (S. 86 Bip.), where Socrates's opinion also appears (S. 133). The same emerges from Gellius's report (XX, 1) of a certain Lucius Veratius, who amused himself by slapping Roman citizens he met in the street without provocation. To forestall all complications, he had a slave accompany him with a purse of copper coins and immediately pay each surprised victim the legally prescribed compensation of 25 asses. *Crates*, the famous Cynic, received so violent a slap from the musician Nicodromus that his face became swollen and bloodied. He then fastened to his forehead a little board inscribed Nicodromus made this (*Nicodromus did it*), bringing great shame upon the flute player who had committed such brutality against a man revered by all Athens like a household god (Apul. Flor. p. 126 bip.). (Diog. Laert. VI, 89.)—From *Diogenes* of Sinope we have a letter to Melesippus about having been beaten by the drunken sons of Athenians, in which he tells him it is of no importance. (Nota Casaub. ad Diog. Laert. VI, 33.)—Seneca, in *On the Constancy of the Wise*, from C. 10 to the end, considered insult, *affront*, in detail to show that the wise man disregards it. In chapter 14 he says: "*But what will the wise man do when struck in the face? What Cato did when struck in the mouth: he did not flare up, did not avenge the injury; he did not even forgive it, but denied that it had happened.*" "Yes," you cry, "but those were wise men!"—And you are fools? Agreed.—

We thus see that the ancients knew nothing of the whole chivalric principle of honor because they remained faithful in every respect to an unprejudiced, natural view of things and therefore would not be talked into such sinister and ruinous grotesqueries. They could accordingly regard a blow in the face as nothing other than what it is: a slight physical injury. For modern people, however, it has become a catastrophe and a subject for tragedies, as in Corneille's *Cid* and a more recent German domestic tragedy called "The Power of

Circumstances,” which ought to be called “The Power of Prejudice.” If a slap actually occurs in the Paris National Assembly, all Europe echoes with it. To the people “of honor,” who must be put out by these classical recollections and examples from antiquity, I recommend as an antidote the story of Mr. *Desglonds* in *Diderot’s* masterpiece *Jacques the Fatalist*, an exquisite specimen of modern chivalric honor on which they may refresh and edify themselves.

The foregoing sufficiently shows that the chivalric principle of honor cannot be an original principle founded in human nature itself. It is therefore artificial, and its origin is not hard to find. It is plainly a child of the time when fists were better trained than heads and priests kept reason in chains: the much-praised Middle Ages and their chivalry. People then let the dear Lord not merely care for them, but judge for them as well. Difficult legal cases were accordingly decided by ordeals, or judgments of God, which with few exceptions consisted in single combat, not merely among knights but also among common citizens, as a charming example in Shakespeare’s *Henry VI* (T. 2, A. 2, Sz. 3) attests. From any judicial verdict one could still appeal to single combat as the higher instance, namely God’s judgment. Thus physical strength and skill, animal nature, were really placed on the judge’s seat instead of reason; right or wrong was decided not by what someone had done but by what befell him, entirely according to the chivalric principle of honor still valid today. Anyone still doubting this origin of dueling should read J. G. Mellinger’s excellent book, *the history of duelling*, 1849. Indeed, even today among people living by the chivalric principle of honor—who, as is well known, are not generally the most informed and reflective—some really consider a duel’s outcome a divine decision of the dispute underlying it, undoubtedly according to a traditionally inherited opinion.

Apart from this origin, the immediate tendency of the chivalric principle of honor is to extort, by threatening physical force, outward signs of the respect one considers either too troublesome or unnecessary actually to earn. It is much as if someone warmed a thermometer’s bulb with his hand and tried to prove by the rising mercury that his room was well heated. Examined more closely, the kernel of the matter is this: just as civic honor, concerned with

peaceful dealings with others, consists in their opinion that we deserve complete *trust* because we unconditionally respect everyone's rights, so chivalric honor consists in the opinion that we are *to be feared*, because we intend unconditionally to defend our own rights. The principle that being feared is more essential than enjoying trust would not even be so very false, since little can be built on human justice, if we lived in the state of nature, where everyone must protect himself and directly defend his rights. But in civilization, where the state has undertaken the protection of our persons and property, it no longer applies, standing useless and abandoned like castles and watchtowers from the days of the right of the fist amid well-cultivated fields, busy highways, or even railways. Accordingly chivalric honor, which retains it, has turned to those injuries to the person which the state punishes only lightly or, under the principle *the law does not concern itself with trifles*, not at all: insignificant affronts and partly mere teasing. In this respect it has worked itself up to an overestimate of personal worth wholly unsuitable to human nature, constitution, and lot, raising that worth to a kind of sanctity. It therefore finds the state's punishment for slight affronts entirely insufficient and undertakes to punish them itself, always against the offender's body and life. Plainly this rests on the most immoderate pride and outrageous arrogance, which, wholly forgetting what a human being really is, claims unconditional inviolability and blamelessness for him. Yet anyone intending to enforce these by violence, and accordingly proclaiming the maxim "Whoever insults me, or even strikes me, shall die," really deserves banishment for that alone[F]. All manner of excuses are then put forward to gloss over this presumptuous arrogance. Of two fearless people, it is said, neither ever yields, so the slightest provocation would lead to abuse, then blows, and finally killing; hence it is better, for propriety's sake, to skip the intermediate stages and go straight to weapons. The detailed procedure has then been brought into a rigid, pedantic system of laws and rules, the most solemn farce in the world, a true temple of honor to folly. But the principle itself is false: in matters of slight importance—great ones are always left to the courts—one of two fearless people certainly yields, namely the wiser, and mere opinions are left alone. The people, or rather all the numerous classes not pro-

fessing the chivalric principle of honor, among whom quarrels take their natural course, furnish the proof. Among these classes, killing is a hundred times rarer than among the fraction, perhaps only 1/1000 of the whole, that worships that principle; even a brawl is a rarity.—It is further claimed that the good tone and refined manners of society have as their ultimate pillar this principle of honor and its duels, a defensive wall against outbreaks of brutality and bad manners. But in Athens, Corinth, and Rome there was certainly good, indeed very good, society, refined manners, and good tone, without the bogey of chivalric honor behind them. Admittedly, women did not preside over society there as they do among us; and this, besides giving conversation a frivolous and trivial character and banishing every substantial discussion, certainly contributes greatly to personal courage's precedence over every other quality in our good society. Yet it is really a very subordinate quality, a mere noncommissioned officer's virtue, indeed one in which even animals surpass us, as when we say "brave as a lion." Indeed, contrary to that claim, the chivalric principle of honor is often a secure asylum for dishonesty and wickedness in great matters, and for bad manners, inconsiderateness, and boorishness in small ones. Many very tiresome improprieties are tacitly tolerated because no one wishes to stake his neck on rebuking them.—Correspondingly we see the duel flourish most and be pursued with bloodthirsty seriousness precisely among the nation that has shown a lack of true honor in political and financial affairs. How it stands in private dealings may be asked of those with experience. As for its urbanity and social cultivation, it has long been famous as a negative example.

[F] Chivalric honor is a child of arrogance and folly. (The opposite truth is expressed most sharply in *The Constant Prince*, in the words: "*That is Adam's inheritance.*") It is very striking that this superlative of all arrogance is found solely and exclusively among adherents of the religion that makes the utmost humility their duty, while neither earlier ages nor other parts of the world know this principle of chivalric honor. Yet it must not be ascribed to religion, but rather to feudalism, in which every noble regarded himself as a little sovereign acknowledging no human judge above him, and therefore learned to attribute complete inviolability and personal sanctity to himself. Every attack upon it,

every blow and abusive word, accordingly seemed to him a crime worthy of death. Thus the principle of honor and duels were originally the affair of the nobility alone, and consequently later of officers, whom other higher classes subsequently joined here and there, though never universally, so as not to count for less. Even if duels arose from ordeals, these are not the ground but the consequence and application of the principle of honor: whoever recognizes no human judge appeals to the divine. Ordeals themselves, however, are not peculiar to Christianity but are also strongly present in Hinduism, mostly in earlier times, though traces remain even now.—

All those pretexts therefore fail. It may be urged with more justice that, just as a dog growls back when growled at and responds affectionately when caressed, so human nature returns every hostile encounter with hostility and is embittered and provoked by signs of contempt or hatred. Hence Cicero already says: *An insult has a certain sting which prudent and good men find exceedingly hard to endure*; and nowhere in the world, apart from a few pious sects, are abusive words, much less blows, accepted calmly. Yet nature by no means leads beyond retaliation proportionate to the matter, not to punishing an accusation of lying, stupidity, or cowardice with death. The old German principle “a slap in the face deserves a dagger” is an outrageous chivalric superstition. In any case, answering or avenging insults is a matter of anger, not of honor and duty, as the chivalric principle stamps it. Rather, it is quite certain that every reproach can hurt only insofar as it hits home; this is also evident from the faintest hint that hits home wounding far more deeply than the gravest entirely groundless accusation. Anyone really conscious of not deserving a reproach may and will confidently despise it. Yet the principle of honor demands that he display a sensitivity he does not possess and bloodily avenge insults that do not hurt him. Someone who hastens to press a thumb into the eye of every utterance disputing his worth, so that it cannot speak aloud, must himself have a poor opinion of that worth. True self-esteem will therefore confer genuine indifference toward insults; where its absence prevents this, prudence and cultivation will teach us to preserve the appearance of indifference and conceal anger. If only we were rid of the superstition of the chivalric principle of honor, so that no

one could imagine that abuse takes anything from another's honor or restores his own, and no injustice, brutality, or rudeness could be instantly legitimized through willingness to give satisfaction—that is, fight for it—it would soon be universally understood that when matters turn to abuse and insults, the loser in that contest is the victor. As *Vincenzo Monti* says, insults behave like church processions, always returning to where they started. Further, it would no longer suffice, as now, to bring a piece of rudeness to market to remain in the right; insight and understanding could consequently make themselves heard quite differently from now. At present they must always first consider whether they might somehow offend the opinions of narrowness and stupidity, already alarmed and embittered by their mere appearance, and thereby cause the head they inhabit to be staked on a throw of the dice against the shallow skull housing the other qualities. Intellectual superiority would then attain its rightful primacy in society, now held, though covertly, by physical superiority and husar courage. Consequently the finest people would have one reason fewer than now to withdraw from society. Such a change would bring about *true* good tone and prepare the way for really good society in the form it undoubtedly had in Athens, Corinth, and Rome. Anyone wishing to see a sample should read Xenophon's Symposium.

The final defense of the chivalric code will undoubtedly be: "Why, God preserve us, one person might actually strike another!"—I could answer briefly that this has happened often enough among the 999/1000 of society who do not recognize that code, without anyone ever dying of it; among its adherents, by contrast, every blow generally becomes fatal. But I will examine it more closely. I have often tried to find, either in humanity's animal or rational nature, some tenable or at least plausible ground for the conviction, so firmly established in part of human society, of a blow's appalling character: a ground consisting not in mere phrases but reducible to clear concepts. In vain. A blow is and remains a small physical evil anyone can inflict on another, thereby proving nothing beyond greater strength or skill, or the other's lack of vigilance. Analysis yields nothing further. Next I see the same knight who considers a blow from a human hand the greatest of evils receive a blow ten times stronger

from his horse and, limping away in suppressed pain, declare it signifies nothing. I then thought the difference lay in the human hand. But I see our knight receive sword thrusts and saber cuts from that hand in battle and declare them trifles, not worth mentioning. Then I learn that even blows with the flat of a blade are far less serious than those with a stick, so that not long ago cadets were exposed to the former but not the latter; and the knightly accolade, delivered with the blade, is actually the highest honor. Here my psychological and moral grounds are exhausted, and nothing remains but to regard the matter as an old, firmly rooted superstition, one more example among so many of what people can be talked into believing. This is also confirmed by the familiar fact that in China blows with a bamboo cane are a very frequent civil punishment, even for officials of every class: this shows us that human nature, even highly civilized human nature, does not say the same thing there[G]. Indeed, an unprejudiced view of human nature teaches that beating is as natural to it as biting to beasts of prey or butting to horned cattle: the human being is a beating animal. Hence we are outraged when, in rare cases, we hear that one person has bitten another, whereas giving and receiving blows is as natural as it is readily occurring. That higher cultivation gladly avoids this too through mutual self-restraint is easily understood. But to impose on a nation, or even a class, the idea that a blow given is a terrible misfortune that must lead to murder and killing is cruelty. There are too many real evils in the world for us to be permitted to multiply them with imaginary ones that bring real ones in their train; yet this is what that stupid, malicious superstition does. I must therefore even disapprove of governments and legislative bodies encouraging it by zealously pressing for the abolition of all corporal punishment in civil and military life. They believe themselves to act in humanity's interest, while the exact opposite is true: they thereby work to entrench that unnatural, ruinous delusion that has already claimed so many victims. For every offense except the gravest, blows are the first punishment that occurs to human beings, and thus the natural one: someone unreceptive to reasons will be receptive to blows. It is as fair as natural that someone who cannot be punished in property, having none, and cannot be punished in freedom without disadvantage to ourselves, because his services are

needed, should be punished by moderate blows. No arguments are advanced against this, only phrases about “human dignity,” founded not on clear concepts but merely on that same pernicious superstition. That this underlies the matter receives almost ludicrous confirmation from the fact that until recently in some countries the military replaced beating with punishment on wooden slats. This, entirely like the former, causes physical pain, yet is now supposedly neither dishonoring nor degrading.

[G] *Twenty or thirty strokes of the cane on the backside are, so to speak, the daily bread of the Chinese. It is a paternal correction from the mandarin, carrying no disgrace, which they receive with thanks.*—Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, édition de 1819. Vol. 11, p. 454.

By thus promoting that superstition, however, we play into the hands of the chivalric principle of honor and therefore the duel, while on the other hand striving, or at least professing to strive, to abolish it through laws[H]. Consequently this fragment of the right of the fist, blown down from the rudest Middle Ages into the nineteenth century, still roams about in it to public scandal. It is high time it was thrown out in disgrace and shame. Nowadays one is not even allowed methodically to set dogs or cocks upon one another—at least such baitings are punished in England—yet people against their will are set upon one another in deadly combat by the ridiculous superstition of the absurd principle of chivalric honor and its narrow-minded representatives and administrators, who oblige them to fight like gladiators over some trifle. To our German purists I therefore propose knight-baiting as a name for the duel, a word probably deriving not from Latin *duellum* but Spanish *duelo*, grief, lament, complaint. The pedantry with which this folly is pursued certainly gives matter for laughter. Yet it is outrageous that this principle and its absurd code establish a state within the state, recognizing no right except the right of the fist and tyrannizing the classes subject to it by keeping open a sacred Vehmic tribunal. Before it anyone can summon anyone else, using easily contrived occasions as bailiffs, to have a judgment of life and death passed upon both. Naturally it becomes a hiding place from which the most depraved person, provided he belongs to those classes, can threaten or even remove from the

world the noblest and best, whom precisely as such he must hate. Now that justice and police have largely prevented every scoundrel on the highway from calling out "Your money or your life," sound reason should finally also prevent every scoundrel amid peaceful intercourse from crying "Your honor or your life." The oppression should be lifted from the breasts of the higher classes arising from everyone's liability, at every moment, to answer with body and life for the brutality, rudeness, stupidity, or malice of anyone else who pleases to vent them upon him. That two young, inexperienced hotheads, quarreling in words, should pay with their blood, health, or life cries to heaven: it is disgraceful. How grievous is the tyranny of this state within the state, and how great this superstition's power, may be measured by the fact that people unable to restore wounded chivalric honor because the offender's station was too high or too low, or his circumstances otherwise unsuitable, have repeatedly killed themselves in despair and thus met a tragicomic end.—Since the false and absurd generally unveil themselves at last by bringing forth contradiction as their blossom at their summit, this finally emerges here too as the most glaring antinomy: the officer is forbidden to duel, but punished by dismissal if, when the occasion arises, he fails to do so.

[H] The real reason governments appear so eager to suppress dueling and, although this would plainly be very easy, especially at universities, behave as though they simply cannot succeed, seems to me the following. The state cannot fully pay for its officers' and civil servants' services in money, so it lets the other half of their wages consist in honor, represented by titles, uniforms, and decorations. To keep this ideal remuneration for their services at a high rate, the sense of honor must be nourished and sharpened in every way, if necessary somewhat exaggerated. Since civic honor is insufficient for this purpose, if only because it is shared with everyone, chivalric honor is called in and maintained as described. In England, where military and civil salaries are far higher than on the Continent, this expedient is unnecessary. Hence dueling there, especially in these last twenty years, has been almost entirely eradicated, now occurs

extremely rarely, and is then laughed at as folly. The great *Anti-duelling-society*, counting many lords, admirals, and generals among its members, has certainly contributed greatly, and Moloch must manage without his victims.

But since I have begun, I will go further in frank speech. Viewed in the light and without prejudice, the difference considered so important and exalted—whether one kills one's enemy in open combat with equal weapons or from ambush—rests solely on the fact that this state within the state, as said, recognizes no right but that of the stronger, the right of the fist, and has raised it to divine judgment as the basis of its code. For by the former one has proved nothing beyond greater strength or skill. The justification sought in enduring open combat therefore presupposes that the right *of the stronger* really is a *right*. In truth, however, another's poor ability to defend himself gives me the possibility, but by no means the right, to kill him. The latter, my *moral* justification, can rest solely on my *motives* for taking his life. Suppose these really existed or were sufficient: there would be no reason now to make it depend on whether he or I could shoot or fence better; it would then be immaterial how I took his life, from behind or in front. Morally, the right of the stronger carries no more weight than the right of the cleverer employed in treacherous murder: the right of the head thus weighs equally with that of the fist. We should also note that both are asserted in a duel, since every fencing feint is already a stratagem. If I regard myself as morally justified in taking someone's life, it is stupidity to make the matter depend on whether he may shoot and fence better than I do, in which case he is now, conversely, to take my life on top of the injury he has already done me. That insults should be avenged not by dueling but by assassination is *Rousseau's* view, cautiously intimated in the mysteriously worded twenty-first note to book four of *Emile* (S. 173, Bip.). Yet he is so strongly caught in chivalric superstition that he considers merely suffering an accusation of lying a justification for assassination, although he must have known that everyone has deserved this accusation countless times, and he himself in the highest degree. The prejudice making the right to kill an offender conditional on open combat with equal weapons plainly considers the right of the fist a real right and single combat a judgment of God. The Italian who, aflame with

anger, attacks his offender with a knife wherever he finds him acts at least consistently and naturally: he is wiser, but no worse, than the duelist. If one claimed that in killing my enemy in single combat I am justified because he was trying to kill me, the objection is that by challenging him I placed him in a position of self-defense. Deliberately putting one another in a position of self-defense really means only seeking a plausible pretext for murder. Justification through the principle *no wrong is done to the willing* might be more plausible, since by mutual agreement we have staked our lives on this game; yet the objection is that the *willing* part is not genuine, since the tyranny of the chivalric principle of honor and its absurd code is the bailiff that dragged both combatants, or at least one, before this bloody Vehmic tribunal.

I have been expansive about chivalric honor, but with good intentions, and because philosophy is the sole Hercules against this world's moral and intellectual monsters. Two things chiefly distinguish the social condition of modern times from antiquity's to the former's disadvantage, giving it a serious, gloomy, sinister cast, free of which antiquity stands cheerful and unprejudiced, like life's morning. They are the chivalric principle of honor and venereal disease—a *noble pair of brothers*! Together they have poisoned life's strife and love. Venereal disease extends its influence much farther than might appear at first glance, its effect being by no means merely physical but also moral. Since Cupid's quiver came to carry poisoned arrows too, a strange, hostile, indeed diabolical element has entered relations between the sexes, permeating them with gloomy, fearful distrust. The direct influence of such a change in the foundation of all human community extends more or less to the other social relations too; explaining this would lead me too far afield.—Analogous, though wholly different in kind, is the influence of the chivalric principle of honor, this solemn farce foreign to the ancients, which makes modern society stiff, serious, and anxious, if only because every passing utterance is scrutinized and pondered. But more than this! That principle is a universal Minotaur, to whom not one country, as to the ancient monster, but every country in Europe must annually pay tribute in sons of noble houses. It is therefore time to attack this bogey boldly, as has been done here. May both monsters of modern times meet

their end in the nineteenth century! Let us not abandon hope that doctors, through preventive measures, may finally succeed with the first. Abolishing the *bogey*, however, is the philosopher's task through correction of concepts, since governments have so far failed through enforcement of laws; moreover, only the former course attacks the evil at its root. If governments are really serious about abolishing dueling, and their meager success is really due only to inability, I will propose a law whose success I guarantee without bloody operations, scaffold or gallows, or lifelong imprisonment. It is rather a tiny, quite mild homeopathic remedy: whoever challenges another or appears to fight receives, *in the Chinese manner*, in broad daylight before the main guardhouse, 12 strokes of a stick from the corporal; challenge-bearers and seconds receive 6 each. For any consequences of duels actually fought, ordinary criminal proceedings would remain. Perhaps a chivalrous-minded person will object that after such punishment many a "man of honor" might shoot himself; to which I answer: better that such a fool shoots himself than others.—At bottom, however, I know very well governments are not serious about abolishing duels. Civil servants' salaries, and still more officers', stand far below the worth of their services, except at the highest posts. They are therefore paid the other half in honor, represented first by titles and decorations and, more broadly, by class honor in general. For this class honor the duel is a useful spare horse, and hence already has its preparatory school at universities. Its victims thus pay the deficit in salaries with their blood.—

For completeness, *national honor* should also be mentioned. It is the honor of a whole people as a part of the community of nations. Since that community has no tribunal other than force, and every member must therefore protect its own rights, a nation's honor consists not only in the acquired opinion that it is trustworthy—credit—but also in the opinion that it is to be feared. It must therefore never leave encroachments on its rights unpunished. It thus unites the point of civic honor with that of chivalric honor.—

Fame was counted above as the last part of what a person *represents*, what he is in the world's eyes; this therefore remains to be considered.—Fame and honor are twin siblings, yet like the Dioscuri, of whom Pollux was immortal and

Castor mortal: fame is the immortal brother of mortal honor. This must of course be understood only of fame of the highest kind, true and genuine fame, for there are certainly many kinds of ephemeral fame.—Honor further concerns only qualities demanded of everyone in the same circumstances; fame only qualities demanded of no one. Honor concerns qualities everyone may publicly claim for himself; fame, those no one may claim for himself. While our honor reaches as far as knowledge of us, fame conversely runs ahead of knowledge of us and brings that knowledge as far as it itself reaches. Everyone has a claim to honor; only exceptions to fame, since fame is attained only through extraordinary achievements. These in turn are either *deeds* or *works*, so two paths to fame lie open. A great heart chiefly equips one for *deeds*; a great mind for *works*. Each path has its own advantages and disadvantages. The chief difference is that deeds pass away, works remain. The noblest deed has only a temporary influence, while the work of genius lives and acts through all ages, beneficially and elevatingly. Of deeds only remembrance remains, becoming ever weaker, more distorted, and less interesting, and finally bound to die out unless history receives it and transmits it to posterity in a petrified state. Works, by contrast, are themselves immortal and, especially written ones, can survive every age. Alexander the Great's name and memory live; but Plato and Aristotle, Homer and Horace themselves are still here, living and acting immediately. The Vedas with their Upanishads are here, but no report has reached us of any deeds done in their time[I].—Another disadvantage of deeds is their dependence on opportunity, which must first make them possible. Hence their fame is measured not merely by their inward worth but also by circumstances lending importance and brilliance. Moreover, when deeds are purely personal, as in war, fame depends on the testimony of a few eyewitnesses, who are not always present and then not always just and unprejudiced. Deeds do, however, have the advantage of being practical and thus within the range of general human judgment; if the data are correctly transmitted to it, justice is immediately done, unless their motives are correctly recognized or justly estimated only later, since understanding every action requires knowledge of its motive. The reverse holds with works: their origin depends not on opportunity but solely

on their author, and what they are in themselves they remain as long as they endure. Their difficulty, by contrast, lies in judgment, and grows with the height of their kind: competent judges are often lacking, as are unprejudiced and honest ones. Yet their fame is not decided by *one* tribunal: appeal is possible. For whereas, as said, only the remembrance of deeds reaches posterity, in the form transmitted by contemporaries, works themselves reach it, and apart from perhaps missing fragments, as they are. Here the data are not distorted, and the possibly adverse influence of their original surroundings later falls away. Often only time gradually brings the few truly competent judges, themselves exceptions, who sit in judgment on still greater exceptions. They successively cast their weighty votes, and thus, sometimes admittedly only after centuries, a perfectly just judgment emerges, which no later age overturns. So certain, indeed inevitable, is the fame of works. Whether their author lives to see it, however, depends on external circumstances and chance, and is rarer the higher and more difficult their kind. Accordingly Seneca (ep. 79.) says incomparably beautifully that fame follows merit as unfailingly as the shadow follows the body, though like the shadow it sometimes goes before, sometimes behind it. After explaining this he adds: Even if *envy has imposed silence* on everyone living with you, people will come to judge without resentment or favor. We see incidentally that the art of suppressing merit through spiteful silence and disregard, concealing the good from the public in favor of the bad, was already customary among the scoundrels of Seneca's age as among ours, and that with them, as with ours, *envy pressed their lips shut*.—As a rule, the longer fame is to endure, the later it will arrive, just as everything excellent ripens slowly. Fame destined to become posthumous fame resembles an oak growing very slowly from its seed; light, ephemeral fame resembles fast-growing annuals; false fame, the quickly sprouting weeds promptly uprooted. This process really rests on the fact that the more someone belongs to posterity—that is, properly, to humanity in general and as a whole—the stranger he is to his age. What he produces is not dedicated specially to that age, belonging to it not as such but only insofar as it is part of humanity, and therefore not tinged with its local color. It may consequently readily let him pass by as a stranger. It prizes instead those

serving its short day's affairs or the moment's mood, who thus belong entirely to *it*, live with it, and die with it. Accordingly the histories of art and literature teach throughout that the highest achievements of the human mind have generally been received with disfavor and remained so until higher minds arrived, responded to them, and brought them the standing they afterward retained through the authority thus acquired. All this ultimately rests on everyone's capacity really to understand and value only what is akin to himself. The shallow is akin to the shallow, the vulgar to the vulgar, the obscure to the confused, the brainless to the nonsensical; everyone likes his own works best of all, since they are entirely akin to him. Thus the ancient legendary Epicharmus already sang:

It is no wonder that I say these things,
And that they please themselves and think
Their nature fine: for dog to dog
Seems fairest, ox to ox,
Donkey to donkey, pig to pig.
which I will put into German, so that it is lost on no one:
No wonder that I speak according to my mind,
And they, well pleased with themselves, cling to the illusion
That they deserve praise: so to the dog the dog
Seems fairest of all beings, to the ox the ox,
To the donkey the donkey, and to the pig the pig.

[I] It is therefore a poor compliment to suppose one honors works by calling them deeds, as is fashionable today. Works are of an essentially higher kind. A deed is always merely an action upon a motive, and thus something individual and transitory, belonging to the world's universal, original element, the will. A great or beautiful work, by contrast, endures because it has universal significance, and springs from intelligence: innocent and pure, rising like a fragrance from this world of will.

An advantage of the fame of deeds is that it generally arrives immediately with a powerful explosion, often so strong that it is heard throughout Europe; the fame of works, by contrast, arrives slowly and gradually, softly at first, then ever

louder, often reaching its full strength only after a hundred years. But then it remains, because the works remain, sometimes for millennia. The other kind, however, after its first explosion passes, gradually weakens, becomes known to fewer and ever fewer, until at last it leads only a ghostly existence in history.

Just as even the strongest arm throwing a light object cannot give it a motion that carries it far and makes it strike hard, but it falls feebly nearby for lack of material substance of its own to absorb the imparted force, so it is with beautiful and great thoughts, indeed with masterpieces of genius, when only small, weak, or distorted minds are there to receive them. The voices of the wise in every age have joined in chorus to lament this. Jesus Sirach, for example, says: “Whoever speaks with a fool speaks with someone asleep. When it is over, he says: what is it?”—And Hamlet: *a knavish speech sleeps in a fool’s ear* (a roguish speech sleeps in a fool’s ear). And Goethe:

The happiest word will be mocked

If the hearer’s ear is crooked.

and again:

You have no effect, all stays so dull:

Take heart!

The stone in the marsh

Makes no rings.

And Lichtenberg: “When a head and a book collide and it sounds hollow, is it always the book?”—And again: “Such works are mirrors: if an ape looks in, no apostle can look out.” Indeed, Father Gellert’s very beautiful and touching lament on this deserves to be recalled once more:

“That often the very finest gifts

Have the fewest admirers,

And that the greater part of the world

Takes the bad for the good—

We see this evil every day.

Yet how shall we resist this pest?

I doubt that such affliction

Can be driven from our world.

There is one remedy on earth,
But it is infinitely hard:
The fools must become wise;
And look! They never will.
They never know the worth of things.
Their eye concludes, not their understanding:
They forever praise what is inferior
Because they never knew the good.”

To this intellectual incapacity of human beings, owing to which excellence, as Goethe says, is recognized and valued still more rarely than it is found, is added here, as everywhere, their moral wickedness, appearing as envy. Through the fame someone acquires, one more person is raised above all of his kind; they are therefore lowered by as much, so that every outstanding merit gains its fame at the expense of those who possess none.

“When we give others honor,
We must strip ourselves of nobility.”

Goethe. W. O. Divan.

This explains why, in whatever kind excellence appears, the whole numerous body of mediocrity is at once allied and sworn to deny it recognition, indeed to stifle it if possible. Its secret watchword is: *down with merit*. Yet even those who possess merit themselves and have already attained its fame do not gladly see a new fame appear, whose brilliance makes their own shine so much less. Hence even Goethe says:

“Had I delayed my coming into being
Until they granted me life,
I would not yet be on the earth,
As you can understand
When you see how those behave
Who, to seem something themselves,
Would gladly deny me.”

Thus while *honor* generally finds just judges, is attacked by no envy, and is even granted to everyone in advance on credit, *fame* must be fought for in defiance of envy, and a tribunal of decidedly unfavorable judges distributes the laurel. For honor we can and wish to share with everyone; fame is diminished or made harder by everyone who attains it.—Further, the difficulty of attaining fame through works stands in inverse proportion to the number of people forming their public, for readily understood reasons. It is therefore much greater for works promising instruction than for those promising entertainment. Greatest of all is the difficulty for philosophical works, because the instruction they promise is both uncertain and without material benefit. Such works consequently appear at first before a public consisting entirely of competitors.—The difficulties opposing the attainment of fame show that if those who complete works worthy of it did not do so from love of the works themselves and their own pleasure in them, but needed encouragement through fame, humanity would have received few immortal works or none. Indeed, anyone to produce the good and right and avoid the bad must defy the judgment of the multitude and its spokesmen, and therefore despise them. On this rests the truth of the observation especially emphasized by *Osorius (On Glory)*, that fame flees those who seek it and follows those who neglect it: the former accommodate themselves to their contemporaries' taste, the latter defy it.

As difficult as fame is to acquire, it is easy to retain. In this too it contrasts with honor, which is granted to everyone, even on credit: one has only to preserve it. But here lies the task, for a single worthless action loses it irretrievably. Fame, by contrast, can really never be lost: the deed or work through which it was gained stands fixed forever, and its fame remains with its author even if he adds no new fame. If fame really fades, if one outlives it, it was false—that is, unmerited, arising from momentary overvaluation—if not actually the kind Hegel had and Lichtenberg describes: “trumpeted by a friendly clique of candidates and echoed by empty heads;— —but posterity, how it will smile when one day it knocks at the colorful word-buildings, the beautiful nests of departed fashion and the dwellings of arrangements long dead, and finds everything, everything empty, not even the smallest thought that could confidently say: *come in!*” —

Fame really rests on what someone is in comparison with others. It is therefore essentially relative and can have only relative worth. It would vanish entirely if the others became what the celebrated person is. Only what retains its worth in every circumstance can have absolute worth: here, what someone is immediately and for himself. In this, then, must lie the worth and happiness of the great heart and great mind. Not fame, therefore, but what deserves it is valuable. This is, so to speak, the substance, and fame merely the accident of the matter. Indeed, fame acts on the celebrated person chiefly as an outward symptom confirming his own high opinion of himself. One might therefore say that just as light is not visible at all unless reflected by a body, so every excellence becomes properly certain of itself only through fame. Yet fame is not even an infallible symptom, since there is fame without merit and merit without fame; hence Lessing's expression comes out so charmingly: "Some people are famous, and others deserve to be." It would be a wretched existence whose worth or worthlessness rested on how it appeared in others' eyes; yet such would be the hero's and genius's life if its worth consisted in fame, in others' approval. Rather, every being lives and exists for its own sake, and therefore first in itself and for itself.—Whatever someone is, in whatever manner, he is first and chiefly for himself; if it is not worth much here, it is not worth much at all. The image of his being in others' heads, by contrast, is secondary, derivative, and subject to chance, relating back to the former only very indirectly. Moreover, the heads of the multitude are too wretched a stage to provide a place for true happiness. Only a chimerical happiness can be found there. What a mixed company assembles in that temple of universal fame! Generals, ministers, quacks, jugglers, dancers, singers, millionaires, and Jews: indeed, the advantages of all these are valued far more sincerely there, finding much more *felt esteem* than intellectual ones, especially of a high kind, which with the great majority receive only *esteem on trust*. From the standpoint of happiness, fame is therefore nothing more than the rarest and most exquisite morsel for our pride and vanity. These, though concealed, are present excessively in most people, perhaps strongest in those in some way fitted to gain fame, who must therefore generally carry an uncertain consciousness of their superior worth within them for a

long time before the opportunity comes to prove it and then experience its recognition. Until then they felt as though suffering a secret injustice[JJ]. In general, as explained at the beginning of this chapter, the value people place on others' opinions of them is wholly disproportionate and irrational. *Hobbes* thus expressed the matter very strongly, but perhaps correctly: *All pleasure of the mind and all cheerfulness consist in having people with whom one can compare oneself and thereby think magnificently of oneself* (de cive. I, 5). This explains the high value generally placed on fame and the sacrifices made merely in hope of attaining it someday:

Fame is the spur, that the clear spirit doth raise

(That last infirmity of noble minds)

To scorn delights and live laborious days.

as also:

how hard it is to climb

The hights where Fame's proud temple shines afar.

[J] Since our greatest pleasure consists in being *admired*, while admirers are reluctant to give admiration even where there is every reason, the happiest person is the one who, no matter how, has succeeded in sincerely admiring himself. Only others must not unsettle him.

Finally, this also explains why the vainest of all nations constantly has *glory* on its lips and unhesitatingly regards it as the chief motive for great deeds and great works.—Yet since fame is indisputably only secondary, the mere echo, image, shadow, and symptom of merit, and what is admired must in any case be worth more than admiration, what truly makes us happy cannot lie in fame but in what attains it: merit itself, or, more precisely, the disposition and abilities from which it arose, whether moral or intellectual. For the best that anyone is, he must necessarily be for himself. What of it is reflected in others' heads, and his standing in their opinion, is incidental and can be of only subordinate interest to him. Whoever therefore merely *deserves* fame, even without receiving it, possesses by far the chief thing, and what he lacks is something for which he can console himself with that chief possession. For what makes a person enviable is not being considered great by the undiscerning and so often deluded multi-

tude, but being great; nor is great happiness found in posterity hearing of him, but in thoughts arising within him that deserve to be preserved and pondered for centuries. Moreover, this cannot be taken from him: it belongs to the things within our power, the other to those outside it. If admiration itself were the chief thing, what is admired would not deserve it. This is really the case with false, unmerited fame. Its possessor must feed on it without really having what it is supposed to signify and merely reflect. Yet even this fame must often become distasteful when, despite all the self-deception arising from self-love, he occasionally grows dizzy at the height for which he is unfit, or feels like a copper ducat. Fear of exposure and deserved humiliation then seizes him, especially when he already reads posterity's judgment on wiser brows. He thus resembles someone in possession through a forged will.—The object of the truest fame, posthumous fame, never hears of it, yet is considered happy. His happiness therefore consisted in the great qualities themselves that gained him fame and in finding opportunity to develop them: being allowed to act as suited him or pursue what he pursued with pleasure and love, for only works arising from such love attain posthumous fame. His happiness therefore consisted in his great heart, or the wealth of a mind whose imprint in its works receives the admiration of coming centuries; it consisted in the thoughts themselves whose contemplation became the occupation and enjoyment of the noblest minds of an unforeseeable future. The value of posthumous fame thus lies in deserving it, and this is its own reward. Whether the works earning it also sometimes enjoyed contemporary fame depended on chance circumstances and was of little significance. For people generally have no judgment of their own and especially no ability to assess high and difficult achievements; they always follow another's authority here, and in a high field fame rests with 99 out of 100 of its proclaimers merely on trust. Even the most many-voiced contemporary applause can therefore have little value for thinking minds: they always hear in it only the echo of a few voices, which are themselves only what the day has produced. Would a virtuoso feel flattered by his audience's loud applause if he knew that, except for one or two people, it consisted entirely of the utterly deaf, clapping eagerly as soon as they saw that one person's hands move, to conceal

their disability from one another? Still less if he also knew those who led the applause often accepted bribes to procure the loudest applause for the most wretched fiddler!—This explains why contemporary fame so rarely undergoes transformation into posthumous fame. Hence *d'Alembert*, in his exceedingly beautiful description of the temple of literary fame, says: “The temple’s interior is inhabited entirely by dead people who were not in it during life, and by a few living people, almost all of whom are thrown out when they die.” Incidentally, erecting a monument to someone during his lifetime means declaring that in his case posterity cannot be trusted.—If someone nevertheless lives to experience fame destined to become posthumous, it will rarely be before old age. There may be exceptions among artists and poets, least of all among philosophers. Portraits of men famous through their works confirm this, since they were mostly made only after celebrity arrived: as a rule they are shown old and gray, especially philosophers. From the standpoint of happiness, however, the matter is quite right. Fame and youth at once are too much for a mortal. Our life is so poor that its goods must be distributed more economically. Youth has quite enough in its own wealth and may be content with it. But in old age, when all pleasures and joys have died like trees in winter, the tree of fame most fittingly puts forth leaves, a true evergreen. It may also be compared to winter pears, which grow in summer but are enjoyed in winter. In old age there is no finer consolation than having embodied all the strength of one’s youth in *works* that do not grow old *with us*.

If we now look more closely at the paths by which fame is attained in the fields of knowledge, the sphere nearest our concern, the following rule may be laid down. The intellectual superiority signified by such fame is always shown through a new combination of some data. These can be of very different kinds; but the fame attainable through combining them will be greater and more widespread the more generally known and accessible to everyone the data themselves are. If, for example, they consist in a few numbers or curves, a particular physical, zoological, botanical, or anatomical fact, corrupt passages of ancient authors, half-effaced inscriptions or inscriptions whose alphabet we lack, or obscure points of history, the fame attainable through their correct

combination will not extend much farther than knowledge of the data themselves: to a small number of mostly retired people jealous of fame in their field.—If, by contrast, the data are known to the whole human race—essential properties of understanding or disposition common to all, natural forces whose entire workings are constantly before our eyes, or the universally familiar course of nature in general—then fame for shedding light on them through a new, important, evident combination will in time extend over almost the whole civilized world. For if the data are accessible to everyone, their combination generally will be too.—Yet fame will always correspond only to the difficulty overcome. The more universally known the data, the harder it is to combine them in a new yet correct way, since an exceedingly great number of minds have already tried and exhausted their impossible combinations. Data inaccessible to the general public, obtainable only by laborious and difficult paths, will by contrast almost always permit new combinations. If one approaches these with straightforward understanding and sound judgment, and thus moderate intellectual superiority, one may very well have the good fortune to make a new and correct combination. But the fame thereby acquired will have roughly the same bounds as knowledge of the data. Solving such problems certainly requires great study and labor even merely to acquire knowledge of the data, while in the other kind, in which the greatest and most widespread fame can be gained, the data are given free of charge. Yet in proportion as this latter kind requires less labor, it requires more talent, indeed genius; and no labor or study can compare with these in worth or esteem.

It follows that people conscious of sound understanding and correct judgment, without crediting themselves with the highest intellectual gifts, must not shrink from much study and exhausting labor. Through these they can work their way out of the great crowd confronted with universally known data and reach remoter places accessible only to learned diligence. Here, with the number of competitors infinitely reduced, even a moderately superior mind will soon find an opportunity for a new and correct combination of data; the merit of the discovery will even rest partly on the difficulty of reaching those data. But the applause of fellow scholars, the only experts in the field, will be heard by the

great multitude only from afar.—Following this path to its extreme, we can identify the point where the data, owing to the great difficulty of obtaining them, suffice alone to establish fame, without any combination being required. Journeys to very remote and little-visited countries accomplish this: one becomes famous through what one has seen, not through what one has thought. This path also has the great advantage that it is much easier to communicate to others what one has seen than what one has thought; the same holds for understanding it. Accordingly one finds many more readers for the former than the latter. For as Asmus already says:

“When someone makes a journey,
He has something to relate.”

Correspondingly, on personally meeting famous people of this kind one is often reminded of Horace’s observation:

Those who cross the sea change their sky, not their mind.

(Epist. I, 11, v. 27.)

As for a mind endowed with high abilities, which alone may venture to solve the great and therefore most difficult problems concerning the universal and the whole, it will certainly do well to extend its horizon as far as possible, but always evenly in every direction, never losing itself too far in any particular region known only to a few: not entering deeply into the specialties of any single discipline, much less occupying itself with minutiae. It has no need to turn to hard-to-access objects to escape the press of competitors; what lies before everyone will itself provide material for new, important, and true combinations. Its merit will accordingly be appreciable to everyone who knows the data, and thus to a large part of humanity. This grounds the mighty difference between the fame attained by poets and philosophers and that accessible to physicists, chemists, anatomists, mineralogists, zoologists, philologists, historians, and so forth.

Chapter 5



Counsels and Maxims.

Here, even less than anywhere else, I aim at completeness; otherwise I would have to repeat the many rules for life, some excellent, set down by thinkers of every age, from Theognis and Pseudo-Solomon to Rochefoucauld, and could not avoid many worn-out commonplaces. With completeness, systematic arrangement also largely falls away. We may console ourselves for both by remembering that in matters of this kind they almost inevitably bring boredom in their train. I have given only what occurred to me, seemed worth communicating, and, as far as I recall, has not yet been said, at least not quite and precisely in this way: merely gleanings from the immeasurable field on which others have already worked.

To bring some order into the great variety of views and advice belonging here, however, I will divide them into general counsels, those concerning our conduct toward ourselves, then toward others, and finally toward the course of the world and fate.

A. General Counsels.

- ¹ As the supreme rule of all wisdom in life I regard a proposition *Aristotle* expressed incidentally in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (VII, 12): the prudent person pursues freedom from pain, not pleasure (*the prudent man pursues what is free of pain, not what is pleasant*). Better in German, this might be rendered:

“The rational person pursues not pleasure, but freedom from pain”; or, “The rational person aims at freedom from pain, not enjoyment.” Its truth rests on all pleasure and happiness being negative in nature, pain, by contrast, positive. The elaboration and grounds of this latter proposition can be found in my principal work, Bd. I, § 58. Yet I will illustrate it here through a fact observable daily. If the whole body is healthy and sound except for some small sore or otherwise painful spot, the health of the whole does not enter consciousness; attention is continually directed toward the injured spot’s pain, and the comfort of the whole feeling of life is abolished.—Likewise, if all our affairs go as we wish except *one* contrary to our intention, this one, even if of slight importance, continually returns to mind: we think of it often and little of all the other, more important things going as we wish.—In both cases what is impaired is the will: once as it objectifies itself in the organism, the other time in human striving. In both we see that its satisfaction always acts only negatively and is therefore not directly felt at all, but enters consciousness at most by way of reflection. Its obstruction, by contrast, is the positive element and therefore announces itself. Every pleasure consists merely in removing this obstruction, in liberation from it, and is consequently short-lived.

On this, then, rests the Aristotelian rule praised above, directing our attention not toward life’s pleasures and amenities, but toward escaping its countless evils as far as possible. If this were not the right path, *Voltaire’s* saying, *happiness is only a dream, and pain is real*, would have to be as false as it is in fact true. Anyone wishing to reckon the result of his life from the standpoint of happiness should therefore calculate not by the joys enjoyed, but by the evils escaped. Indeed, eudemonology must begin by teaching that its very name is a euphemism, and that “living happily” means only living “less unhappily,” and thus tolerably. Life is not really there to be enjoyed, but to be endured and finished with; various expressions also signify this, such as *to pass one’s life*, *to be done with life*, the Italian *one gets through in this way*, the German “one must try to get through,” “he will make his way through the world,” and so forth. Indeed, it is a consolation in old age to have life’s labor behind one. The happiest lot therefore belongs to whoever passes life without excessive mental or

physical pain, not to whoever receives the liveliest joys or greatest pleasures. Anyone measuring the happiness of a life's course by these has taken up a false standard. For pleasures are and remain negative: that they make us happy is a delusion envy harbors to its own punishment. Pains, by contrast, are positively felt; their absence is therefore the measure of happiness in life. If freedom from boredom joins a painless condition, earthly happiness is essentially attained, for the rest is chimera. It follows that we should never buy pleasures with pains, or even the danger of them, since otherwise we pay for something negative and thus chimerical with something positive and real. We remain in profit, however, when we sacrifice pleasures to escape pain. In both cases it is immaterial whether the pains follow or precede the pleasures. It is truly the greatest perversity to try to turn this scene of misery into a pleasure resort and set pleasures and joys as one's goal instead of the greatest possible freedom from pain, as so many do. Someone errs far less who, with too gloomy a gaze, regards this world as a kind of hell and therefore thinks only of securing a fireproof room within it. The fool runs after life's pleasures and finds himself deceived; the wise person avoids its evils. If he fails even in this, the fault lies with fate, not with his folly. Insofar as he succeeds, he is not deceived, for the evils he avoided are entirely real. Even if he has perhaps gone too far in avoiding them and sacrificed pleasures unnecessarily, nothing has really been lost: all pleasures are chimerical, and grieving over missing them would be petty, indeed ridiculous.

Failure to recognize this truth, encouraged by optimism, is the source of much unhappiness. For while we are free from suffering, restless desires conjure up before us the phantoms of a happiness that does not exist at all, and tempt us to pursue them: in doing so, we bring down upon ourselves pain, whose reality is undeniable. Then we lament the painless state we have lost, which lies behind us like a paradise thrown away, and wish in vain that we could undo what has been done. It seems, then, as though some evil demon were forever luring us out of the painless condition, which is the highest actual happiness, by the illusions of desire.—Without looking closely, a young man believes that the world exists to be enjoyed; that it is the home of a positive happiness missed only by those who lack the skill to make themselves its masters. Novels and poems con-

firm him in this, as does the universal hypocrisy of appearances practiced everywhere in the world, to which I shall soon return. From then on, his life is a more or less deliberately conducted hunt for positive happiness, which, as such, is supposed to consist in positive pleasures. The dangers to which he exposes himself in the process must be risked. This hunt for game that does not exist generally leads, then, to very real, positive unhappiness. It arrives as pain, suffering, illness, loss, anxiety, poverty, disgrace, and a thousand afflictions. Disillusionment comes too late.—If, by contrast, we follow the rule considered here and make the plan of our lives aim at avoiding suffering, and thus at keeping away want, illness, and every distress, our goal is a real one: something can be accomplished, and all the more, the less this plan is disturbed by the pursuit of the phantom of positive happiness. This accords, too, with what *Goethe*, in *Elective Affinities*, has *Mittler*, who is always working for other people's happiness, say: "Anyone who wants to be rid of an evil always knows what he wants; anyone who wants something better than he has is completely blind." And this recalls the fine French saying: *the better is the enemy of the good*. Indeed, the fundamental idea of Cynicism can be derived from this, as I have set it out in my principal work, Bd. 2, Kap. 16. For what moved the Cynics to reject all pleasures, if not precisely the thought of the pains connected with them, more or less remotely, which it seemed far more important to avoid than to obtain those pleasures? They were deeply impressed by the recognition that pleasure is negative and pain positive; hence, consistently, they did everything to avoid evils, but considered the complete and deliberate rejection of pleasures necessary to this end, because they saw in these only snares that deliver us over to pain.

We are all, of course, born in Arcadia, as Schiller says: that is, we enter the world full of claims to happiness and enjoyment, and cherish the foolish hope of making them good. As a rule, however, fate soon comes, seizes us roughly, and teaches us that nothing is *ours*, but everything *its own*, since it has an undisputed right not only to all our possessions and earnings, to wife and child, but even to arm and leg, eye and ear, indeed, to the nose in the middle of our face. In any case, after a while experience comes and brings the insight that happiness and enjoyment are a mirage, visible only from a distance and vanishing as we

approach; whereas suffering and pain have reality, make themselves felt immediately, and need neither illusion nor expectation. If the lesson takes hold, we stop hunting for happiness and enjoyment, and instead take care to bar pain and suffering as far as possible. We then recognize that the best the world has to offer is a painless, quiet, tolerable existence, and confine our claims to this, to make them good all the more surely. For the surest means of not becoming very unhappy is not to demand to be very happy. Goethe's youthful friend *Merck* had recognized this too when he wrote: "The nasty claim to happiness, and to the measure of it that we dream of, spoils everything in this world. Whoever can free himself of that, and desire nothing but what lies before him, can make his way through" (*Briefe an und von Merck*, S. 100). It is therefore advisable to reduce one's claims to enjoyment, property, rank, honor, and so on to something quite modest, because it is precisely the striving and struggle for happiness, splendor, and enjoyment that bring great misfortunes upon us. But this is wise and advisable for the further reason that being very unhappy is quite easy, while being very happy is not merely difficult, but wholly impossible. With perfect justice, then, the poet of worldly wisdom sings:

Whoever loves the golden mean
Lives safely, free of the squalor
Of a crumbling roof, and soberly avoids
A palace others envy.
The towering pine is lashed more fiercely
By the winds; the higher towers
Fall with a heavier crash; and lightning
Strikes the mountain summits.

But anyone who has fully absorbed the teaching of my philosophy, and therefore knows that our entire existence is something that would be better not to be, and that the greatest wisdom is to deny and reject it, will harbor no great expectations of any thing or condition, strive passionately for nothing in the world, or raise great lamentations over failing to obtain anything. Rather, he will be imbued with Plato's "Nothing in human affairs is worth great earnestness" (rep. X, 604), and also with this:

If possession of a world has slipped away from you,
Do not grieve for it: it is nothing;
And if you have gained possession of a world,
Do not rejoice in it: it is nothing.
Pains and pleasures pass away;
Pass the world by: it is nothing.

Anwari Sobeili.

(Siehe das Motto zu Sadis Gulistan, übers. von Graf.)

What makes these salutary insights especially difficult to acquire, however, is the world's hypocrisy of appearances, already mentioned above, which should therefore be exposed to the young early on. The vast majority of its splendors are mere show, like stage scenery, with the substance missing. Ships decked with pennants and garlands, for example, cannon fire, illuminations, drums and trumpets, cheering and shouting, and so on—all this is the signboard, the indication, the hieroglyph of *joy*; but joy itself is usually nowhere to be found there: it alone has declined to attend the celebration. Where it really does appear, it generally comes uninvited and unannounced, of its own accord and without ceremony, indeed, stealing in quietly, often on the most insignificant, trivial occasions, amid the most everyday circumstances, even on occasions that are anything but splendid or glorious. Like the gold in Australia, it is scattered here and there at the whim of chance, without rule or law, usually only in very small grains, exceedingly rarely in great masses. With all those things mentioned above, on the other hand, the purpose is merely to make others believe that joy has arrived: this appearance, in other people's minds, is the aim. Grief is no different from joy in this respect. How mournfully that long, slow funeral procession approaches! There is no end to the line of carriages. But just look inside: they are all empty, and the departed is really being accompanied to the grave only by all the coachmen in the city. An eloquent image of this world's friendship and esteem! Such, then, is the falsity, hollowness, and hypocrisy of human activity.—Another example is provided by the many invited guests in formal dress receiving a festive welcome: they are the signboard of noble, elevated sociability; but in its place, as a rule, only constraint, discomfort, and boredom

have arrived. For wherever there are many guests there is much rabble—even if they all wear stars on their breasts. Truly good company is, everywhere and necessarily, very small. In general, splendid, noisy festivities and entertainments always carry an emptiness within them, even a discordant note, if only because they loudly contradict the misery and poverty of our existence, and the contrast heightens the truth. Yet seen from outside, all this has its effect: and that was the aim. *Chamfort* therefore says with exquisite aptness: *Society, circles, salons, what is called the world, is a wretched play, a bad, uninteresting opera, sustained to some extent by its machinery, costumes, and scenery.*—Academies and professorial chairs in philosophy are likewise the signboard, the outward appearance, of *wisdom*; but it too has usually declined the invitation, and is to be found somewhere quite different.—The jingling of bells, priestly costumes, pious gestures, and grotesque antics are the signboard, the false appearance, of devotion, and so on.—Thus almost everything in the world may be called an empty nutshell: the kernel is rare in itself, and rarer still inside the shell. It must be sought somewhere quite different, and is usually found only by chance.

- ² To judge how happy a person is, we should ask not what pleases him, but what troubles him: for the more trivial this is in itself, the happier the person must be, since it takes a state of well-being to make us sensitive to trifles; in misfortune we do not feel them at all.
- ³ We should take care not to build the happiness of our lives on a *broad foundation* by making many things necessary to it: for standing on such a foundation, it collapses most easily, because it offers far more openings for accidents, and these will not fail to come. In this respect, then, the structure of our happiness behaves in precisely the opposite way from all others, which stand most firmly on broad foundations. To keep our claims as low as possible in relation to our resources of every kind is therefore the surest way to escape great misfortune. In general, one of the greatest and commonest follies is to make *elaborate preparations* for life, whatever form these may take. To begin with, they count on an entire, full human lifetime, which very few attain. Then, even if they live so long, life still proves too short for the plans they have made, since carrying them

out always requires far more time than was assumed. Moreover, like all human affairs, such plans are exposed to failure and obstacles in so many ways that they are very rarely brought to completion. Finally, even if everything is eventually achieved, the changes that time works in *ourselves* have been left out of account: we have not considered that our powers, whether of achievement or enjoyment, will not hold out throughout our lives. Hence we often work toward things that, when finally attained, no longer suit us; and spend on the preparations for a work the very years that meanwhile, unnoticed, rob us of the strength to carry it out. Thus it often happens that wealth acquired through such long toil and many dangers can no longer be enjoyed, and we have worked for others; or that we can no longer fill the post finally attained through years of activity and striving: things have come too late for us. Or conversely, we come too late with our things—where achievements or productions are concerned: the taste of the age has changed; a new generation has grown up that takes no interest in them; others have forestalled us by shorter routes, and so on. Everything discussed under this number is what Horace has in mind when he says:

Why weary with plans for eternity

A mind too small for them?

The cause of this frequent mistake is the unavoidable optical illusion of the mind's eye, by which life seems endless when seen from its entrance, but very short when we look back from the end of the course. Admittedly, this has its good side: without it, scarcely anything great would be accomplished.

In general, though, we fare in life like a traveler before whom, as he advances, objects assume shapes different from those they showed at a distance, and seem to transform themselves as he approaches. This happens especially with our wishes. Often we find something quite different, indeed better, than what we sought; often, too, we find the very thing we sought by a quite different road from the one we first took in vain. In particular, where we sought enjoyment, happiness, and joy, we often receive instruction, insight, knowledge instead—a lasting, genuine good in place of a fleeting and illusory one. This is also the thought that runs like a ground bass through *Wilhelm Meister*, making it an intellectual novel and, precisely for that reason, of a higher kind than all the

rest, even those of Walter Scott, which are all merely ethical: that is, they grasp human nature only from the side of the will. In *The Magic Flute*, too, that grotesque yet significant and many-layered hieroglyph, the same fundamental idea is symbolized in broad, rough strokes, like those of stage scenery. Indeed, it would be perfectly expressed if, at the end, Tamino, cured of his wish to possess Tamina, desired and received instead only initiation into the temple of wisdom, while his necessary counterpart, Papageno, duly received his Papagena.—Excellent and noble people soon become aware of this education by fate and submit to it receptively and gratefully: they see that instruction is indeed to be found in the world, but not happiness; accordingly, they grow accustomed and content to exchange hopes for insights, and finally say with Petrarch:

I know no other pleasure than learning.

This may even reach the point where they pursue their wishes and ambitions only for appearance's sake, as it were, and playfully, while in reality, in the earnest depths of their hearts, they expect nothing but instruction; this then gives them a contemplative, inspired, elevated air.—In this sense we may also say that we are like the alchemists who, while seeking only gold, discovered gunpowder, porcelain, medicines, and even laws of nature.

B. Concerning our conduct toward ourselves.

- ⁴ As the laborer helping to put up a building either does not know the plan of the whole or at least does not always keep it in mind, so does a person, as he spins out the individual days and hours of his life, stand in relation to the whole course of that life and its character. The more worthy, significant, purposeful, and individual this is, the more necessary and beneficial it becomes for its reduced outline, its plan, to come before his eyes from time to time. Of course, this also requires that he have made a small beginning in “know yourself”: that he know what he really, principally, and above all else wants, and thus what is most essential to his happiness, and then what takes second and third place after it; and that he recognize, in general, his vocation, his role, and his

relation to the world. If this is of a significant and grand kind, the sight of his life's plan on a smaller scale will strengthen, hearten, and elevate him more than anything else, encourage him to activity, and keep him from straying.

Just as a traveler only surveys and understands the road he has covered, with all its twists and turns, as a connected whole once he has reached a height, so only at the end of a period of our lives, or even of life itself, do we recognize the true connection among our deeds, achievements, and works, their precise consistency and interlinking, indeed, their value as well. For as long as we are engaged in them, we act only according to the fixed properties of our character, under the influence of motives and in proportion to our abilities, and thus throughout with necessity, since at every moment we do merely what just then seems right and appropriate to us. Only the outcome shows what has come of it, and a backward look over the whole connection shows how and by what means. For this very reason, while performing our greatest deeds or creating immortal works, we are not conscious of them as such, but merely as appropriate to our present purposes, corresponding to our intentions at the time, and therefore just right for the moment. Only afterward do our character and abilities shine out from the whole in its connectedness; and in the details we then see how, as though by inspiration, we took the one right road among a thousand wrong turns—guided by our genius. All this applies to theory as to practice, and, in the reverse sense, to what is bad and misconceived.

- 5 An important point of worldly wisdom consists in the right proportion in which we devote our attention partly to the present and partly to the future, so that neither spoils the other for us. Many live too much in the present: the frivolous; others too much in the future: the anxious and apprehensive. Seldom will anyone keep precisely the right balance. Those who, through striving and hoping, live only in the future, always looking ahead and rushing impatiently toward things to come as the first things that will bring true happiness, while allowing the present to pass unnoticed and unenjoyed, may, despite their precociously wise expressions, be compared to those donkeys in Italy whose pace is quickened by a bundle of hay hanging from a stick attached to their heads,

which they therefore always see close in front of them and hope to reach. For they cheat themselves of their entire existence by always living only *in the interim*—until they are dead.—Instead, then, of being exclusively and incessantly occupied with plans and worries for the future, or surrendering ourselves to longing for the past, we should never forget that the present alone is real and alone certain, whereas the future almost always turns out differently from what we imagine; indeed, the past too was different, and in such a way that both, on the whole, amount to less than they seem to us. For distance, which diminishes objects to the eye, enlarges them to thought. The present alone is true and actual: it is time really filled, and our existence lies exclusively in it. We should therefore always honor it with a cheerful welcome, and accordingly enjoy every tolerable hour free from immediate vexation or pain, consciously, for what it is; that is, we should not cloud it with sour faces over disappointed hopes in the past or anxieties for the future. For it is utterly foolish to reject a good present hour, or willfully spoil it for ourselves, out of annoyance over the past or apprehension about what is to come. Let care, and even remorse, have their appointed time; afterward, however, we should think of what has happened:

But let us leave what has been done, though grieving,

And tame the spirit in our breasts by necessity,
and of the future:

These things, indeed, lie in the lap of the gods,

but of the present: *Count each day as a separate life* (Sen.), and make this, the only real time, as pleasant for ourselves as possible.

Only those future evils that are certain, and whose time of arrival is also certain, have any right to disturb us. But these will be very few: for evils are either merely possible, at most probable; or they are indeed certain, but the time of their arrival is wholly uncertain. If we dwell on either kind, we shall never have another peaceful moment. To avoid forfeiting the peace of our lives through uncertain or indefinite evils, we must therefore accustom ourselves to regard the former as though they would never come, and the latter as though they would certainly not come soon.

Yet the more peace fear allows a person, the more he is disturbed by wishes, desires, and demands. *Goethe's* much-loved song, "I have staked my cause on nothing," really means that only after a person has been driven out of every possible claim and thrown back upon bare, naked existence does he attain the peace of mind that forms the foundation of human happiness, since it is needed if we are to find the present, and thus the whole of life, enjoyable. To this same end, we should always remember that today comes only once, and never again. But we fancy it will come back tomorrow; tomorrow, however, is another day, which also comes only once. We forget that each day is an integral, and therefore irreplaceable, part of life, and regard it instead as contained in life in the way individuals are contained under a general concept.—We would likewise appreciate and enjoy the present better if, in days of health and well-being, we were always conscious of how, in illness or sorrow, memory presents every hour free of pain and deprivation as infinitely enviable, as a lost paradise, as an unrecognized friend. But we live through our fine days without noticing them: only when the bad ones come do we wish them back. We allow a thousand cheerful, pleasant hours to pass us unenjoyed, with a sour face, only to sigh after them later, in gloomy times, with fruitless longing. Instead, we should hold in honor every tolerable present, even the everyday kind that we now let pass so indifferently, and even shove along impatiently—always remembering that it is just now flowing over into that apotheosis of the past, where henceforth, bathed in the light of imperishability, it will be preserved by memory, to appear as an object of our heartfelt longing whenever memory one day lifts the curtain, especially in an evil hour.

- ⁶ *Every limitation makes us happier.* The narrower our sphere of vision, activity, and contact, the happier we are; the wider it is, the more often we feel tormented or afraid. For with it our cares, wishes, and terrors multiply and grow. Hence even the blind are not as unhappy as they must seem to us *a priori*; the gentle, almost cheerful calm in their features bears witness to this. This rule also partly accounts for the second half of life turning out sadder than the first. For in the course of life the horizon of our aims and relationships grows ever wider.

In childhood it is confined to our immediate surroundings and closest relationships; in youth it already extends considerably farther; in manhood it embraces the whole course of our lives, indeed, often reaches to the remotest relationships, to states and peoples; in old age it embraces our descendants.—Every limitation, on the other hand, even a mental one, promotes our happiness. For the less the will is excited, the less suffering there is; and we know that suffering is positive, happiness merely negative. A limited sphere of activity deprives the will of external occasions for excitement; a limited mind deprives it of internal ones. The latter, however, has the disadvantage of opening the door to boredom, which indirectly becomes the source of countless sufferings, since merely to banish it we grasp at anything, trying diversions, company, luxury, gambling, drinking, and so on, which nevertheless bring damage, ruin, and misfortune of every kind. *Peace is difficult in idleness.* How greatly *external* limitation, by contrast, promotes human happiness, as far as that can go—indeed, how necessary it is—can be seen from the fact that the only kind of poetry that undertakes to portray happy people, the idyll, always and essentially depicts them in the most restricted circumstances and surroundings. A feeling for this also underlies our pleasure in so-called genre paintings.—Accordingly, the greatest possible *simplicity* in our circumstances, and even *uniformity* in our way of life, will make us happy, so long as it does not produce boredom; for it makes us least aware of life itself, and consequently of its essential burden too: it flows along like a stream, without waves or whirlpools.

- ⁷ Where our well-being or misery is concerned, what ultimately matters is what fills and occupies our consciousness. Here, on the whole, any purely intellectual occupation will do far more for a mind capable of it than actual life with its constant alternation of success and failure, together with its shocks and torments. Admittedly, this requires a marked predominance of intellectual gifts. It should also be noted here that, just as an outwardly active life distracts and diverts us from study, and also deprives the mind of the quiet and concentration it needs, so, on the other hand, sustained intellectual occupation makes us

more or less unfit for the bustle and turmoil of actual life. It is therefore advisable to suspend it entirely for a while whenever circumstances arise that require energetic practical activity of any kind.

- ⁸ To live with complete *reflectiveness* and draw from our own experience all the instruction it contains, we must often look back and review what we have lived through, done, experienced, and felt in the process, and compare our former judgment with our present one, our intentions and strivings with their outcome and the satisfaction it gave us. This is a review of the private lessons experience has given each of us. Our own experience may also be regarded as the text; reflection and knowledge as its commentary. Much reflection and knowledge with little experience resembles those editions whose pages offer two lines of text and forty lines of commentary. Much experience with little reflection and scant knowledge resembles the Bipontine editions, without notes, which leave much unintelligible.

The recommendation given here is also the aim of Pythagoras's rule that in the evening, before falling asleep, we should review what we have done during the day. Anyone who lives amid the bustle of business or pleasure without ever ruminating on his past, but instead keeps unreeling his life, loses clear self-awareness: his inner life becomes a chaos, and a certain confusion enters his thoughts, soon betrayed by the abrupt, fragmentary, almost chopped-up nature of his conversation. This is all the more so, the greater the external unrest and the mass of impressions, and the less the inner activity of his mind.

Here belongs the observation that, after a considerable time, once the circumstances and surroundings that acted upon us have passed away, we cannot recall and renew the mood and feeling they aroused in us then; but we can remember our own *utterances* that they elicited at the time. These are the result, expression, and measure of those feelings. Memory, or paper, should therefore carefully preserve such utterances from memorable moments. Diaries are very useful for this.

⁹ To be sufficient to oneself, to be one's own all in all, and to be able to say *I carry all that is mine with me*, is certainly the quality most conducive to our happiness: hence *Aristotle's* saying, "Happiness belongs to the self-sufficient" (*Happiness belongs to those sufficient to themselves*. Eth. Eud. 7, 2), cannot be repeated too often. (Essentially, it is also the same thought expressed, with an exceedingly graceful turn, by the saying of Chamfort that I have placed as the motto to this essay.) For, on the one hand, we can count with any certainty on no one but ourselves, and on the other, the troubles and disadvantages, the danger and vexation that society brings with it are countless and unavoidable. There is no more mistaken road to happiness than life in the fashionable world, amid revelry and extravagance (*high life*): for its aim is to turn our wretched existence into a succession of joy, enjoyment, and pleasure, where disappointment cannot fail to come; nor can it fail to come with the obligatory accompaniment, our mutual lying to one another[K].

[K] As our body is wrapped in clothes, so our mind is wrapped in lies. Our speech, our actions, our whole bearing are false: only through this covering can our true disposition sometimes be guessed, as the shape of the body can be guessed through its clothes.

To begin with, all company necessarily requires mutual accommodation and moderation; hence the larger it is, the more insipid it becomes. Everyone can be wholly *himself* only while he is alone; whoever does not love solitude, then, does not love freedom either, for only when we are alone are we free. Constraint is the inseparable companion of all company, and all company demands sacrifices that become harder in proportion to the significance of one's own individuality. Accordingly, everyone will flee, endure, or love solitude in exact proportion to the worth of his own self. For in solitude the wretch feels all his wretchedness, the great mind all its greatness—in short, everyone feels himself to be what he is. Further, the higher a person stands in nature's hierarchy, the more solitary he stands, essentially and inevitably. In that case, however, it is a blessing if his physical solitude corresponds to his intellectual solitude; otherwise the frequent presence of alien beings presses disturbingly, even hostilely, upon him, robs him of his self, and has nothing to

give in return. Moreover, while nature has established the widest differences among people, morally and intellectually, society disregards these and makes them all equal—or rather, substitutes for them the artificial distinctions and gradations of station and rank, which very often run directly counter to nature's hierarchy. Under this arrangement, those whom nature has placed low do very well, but the few she has placed high come off badly; hence they generally withdraw from society, and in every gathering, as soon as it is numerous, vulgarity predominates. What makes society distasteful to great minds is the equality of rights, and consequently of claims, alongside the inequality of abilities, and consequently of the others' contributions to company. So-called good society recognizes advantages of every kind except intellectual ones; these are actually contraband. It obliges us to show boundless patience toward every folly, absurdity, perversity, and dullness, while personal merits must beg forgiveness or conceal themselves; for intellectual superiority offends by its mere existence, without any act of the will. Accordingly, the society called good has not only the disadvantage of offering us people whom we cannot praise and love; it also does not permit us to be as our nature requires, but instead forces us, for the sake of harmony with others, to shrink, or even to deform ourselves. Intelligent remarks or ideas belong only before intelligent company: in ordinary company they are positively hated; for to please there, it is absolutely necessary to be flat and narrow-minded. In such company, therefore, we must, with severe self-denial, surrender three-quarters of ourselves to resemble the others. In return, admittedly, we then have the others; but the more worth a person has in himself, the more he will find that the gain does not cover the loss, and the bargain goes against him, because people are generally insolvent: that is, they have nothing to offer in their company that would compensate for its tediousness, troubles, and unpleasantness, and for the self-denial it imposes. Most company is therefore such that anyone who exchanges it for solitude makes a good bargain. Added to this is the fact that society, to replace genuine—that is, intellectual—superiority, which it cannot tolerate and which is also hard to find, has arbitrarily adopted a false, conventional superiority, resting on arbitrary rules and passed down by tradition among the upper classes, as change-

able as a watchword: this is what is called good form, *good manners, fashionableness*. Yet whenever it collides with genuine superiority, its weakness is revealed.—Besides, *when good form arrives, good sense withdraws*.

In general, however, everyone can be *in perfect harmony* only with himself—not with his friend, not with his beloved; for differences of individuality and mood always produce a dissonance, however slight. Hence true, deep peace of heart and perfect tranquility of mind, the highest earthly good after health, can be found only in solitude, and as a lasting disposition only in the deepest seclusion. If one's own self is then great and rich, one enjoys the happiest state that can be found on this poor earth. Indeed, let it be said outright: however closely friendship, love, and marriage unite people, in the end everyone *truly cares* only for himself, and at most for his child as well.—The less a person needs, owing to objective or subjective conditions, to come into contact with others, the better off he is. Solitude and desolation let us survey all their evils at once, even if we do not feel them; society, by contrast, is *insidious*: behind the appearance of amusement, communication, social enjoyment, and so forth, it conceals great and often incurable evils. A principal study of youth should be *learning to endure solitude*, because it is a source of happiness and peace of mind.—From all this it follows that the person best off is the one who has counted only on himself and can be his own all in all; Cicero even says: *No one can fail to be supremely happy who depends wholly on himself and places everything in himself alone*. (Paradox. II.) Moreover, the more a person has in himself, the less others can be to him. A certain feeling of all-sufficiency keeps people of inner worth and richness from making the considerable sacrifices that association with others demands, much less seeking it with marked self-denial. The opposite makes ordinary people so sociable and accommodating: they find it easier to endure others than themselves. There is also the fact that what has real worth in the world is not esteemed, and what is esteemed has no worth. The seclusion of every worthy and distinguished person is both proof and consequence of this. In view of all this, it will be genuine worldly wisdom in anyone who has some-

thing substantial within himself to restrict his needs if necessary, merely to preserve or extend his freedom, and accordingly to keep his personal dealings with the human world as brief as possible, since some such ties are unavoidable.

What makes people sociable, on the other hand, is their inability to endure solitude, and in it themselves. Inner emptiness and weariness drive them into society as well as abroad and into travel. Their minds lack the spring to set themselves in motion: hence they seek to heighten it with wine, and many become drunkards in this way. For the same reason they need constant stimulation from outside, and of the strongest kind—that is, from beings like themselves. Without it their minds collapse under their own weight and fall into an oppressive lethargy[L]. We might likewise say that each of them is only a small fraction of the Idea of humanity, and therefore needs much supplementation by others to produce anything like a complete human consciousness; whereas someone who is a whole human being, a human being *in the fullest sense*, represents a unit and not a fraction, and is therefore sufficient to himself. In this sense, ordinary company may be compared to that Russian horn music in which each horn has only one note, and music emerges only through the precise coincidence of them all. For the outlook and mind of the vast majority of people are as monotonous as such a one-note horn: many of them actually look as though they forever had only one and the same thought, incapable of thinking any other. This explains not only why they are so tedious, but also why they are so sociable and most like to move in herds: *the gregariousness of mankind*. It is the monotony of his own nature that becomes intolerable to each of them—*all foolishness suffers from weariness of itself*—and only together, only through their union, are they anything at all, like those horn players. The intelligent person, by contrast, may be compared to a virtuoso who performs his concert *alone*, or to a piano. For just as the piano is a small orchestra all by itself, so he is a little world, and embodies in the unity of a single consciousness what all the others become only through cooperation. Like the piano, he is not a part of the symphony, but is suited to the solo and to a self-contained whole; if he is to work with them, he can do so only as the principal voice with accompaniment, like the piano, or to set the pitch in vocal music, like the piano.—Anyone who

nevertheless loves company can derive from this comparison the rule that what the people he associates with lack in quality must to some degree be replaced by quantity. He may find enough company in a single intelligent person; but if nothing except the ordinary sort can be found, it is good to have a great many of them, so that through variety and cooperation something may result—on the analogy of the horn music just described—and may heaven grant him patience as well.

[L] As everyone knows, evils are lightened by being borne in common; people seem to count boredom among these, since they gather to be bored together. Just as love of life is fundamentally only fear of death, so people's *social impulse* is not fundamentally a direct one: it rests not on love of company but on fear of *solitude*, since it is not so much the charming presence of others that is sought as the desolation and uneasiness of being alone, together with the monotony of one's own consciousness, that are fled. To escape this, people therefore put up even with bad company, and likewise submit to the irksomeness and constraint that any company necessarily brings with it.—If, on the other hand, aversion to all this has won out, and as a result the habit of solitude and a hardening against its immediate impression have set in, so that it no longer produces the effects described above, then one can remain alone continually in the greatest comfort without yearning for company, precisely because the need for it is not direct, and because, on the other hand, one has now grown accustomed to solitude's beneficial qualities.

That inner emptiness and poverty in people also accounts for this: whenever people of a better kind join together in an association with some noble, ideal aim in view, the outcome is almost always that a few individuals from that *rabble* of humanity—which in countless multitudes fills and covers everything everywhere like vermin, and is always ready to seize upon anything without distinction to relieve its boredom, just as in other circumstances it relieves its want—slip or force their way in there too, and soon either destroy the whole enterprise or change it so that it becomes pretty much the opposite of the original intention.

For that matter, sociability may also be regarded as people warming themselves mentally at one another, like the physical warmth they produce by huddling together in great cold. But anyone who has much mental warmth of his own has no need of such clustering. A fable I devised in this sense will be found in the last chapter of the second volume of this work. In keeping with all this, everyone's sociability stands roughly in inverse proportion to his intellectual worth; and "He is very unsociable" almost amounts to saying "He is a man of great qualities."

For an intellectually superior person, solitude affords a twofold advantage: first, that of being with himself; and second, that of not being with others. The latter will be rated highly if we consider how much constraint, trouble, and even danger every association brings with it. *All our unhappiness comes from being unable to be alone*, says *La Bruyère*. *Sociability* is among the dangerous, indeed destructive, inclinations, since it brings us into contact with beings whose great majority are morally bad and intellectually dull or wrongheaded. The unsociable person is someone who has no need of them. To have so much in oneself that one does not need company is a great good fortune for this reason alone: almost all our sufferings arise from society, and the peace of mind that, next to health, forms the most essential element of our happiness is endangered by all company, and therefore cannot exist without a considerable measure of solitude. To attain the happiness of mental peace, the Cynics renounce every possession; whoever renounces society with the same intention has chosen the wisest means. For what *Bernardin de St. Pierre* says is as apt as it is beautiful: *Abstinence from food restores bodily health, and abstinence from people restores peace of soul*. Thus anyone who early befriends solitude, indeed comes to love it, has acquired a gold mine. But by no means can everyone do this. For just as need originally drives people together, so, once it is removed, boredom does. Without both, everyone would probably remain alone, if only because solitude alone provides surroundings that correspond to the exclusive importance, indeed uniqueness, each person has in his own eyes, and which the press of the

world reduces to nothing, painfully contradicting it at every step. In this sense solitude is even everyone's natural condition: it reinstates him, as the first Adam, in the original happiness appropriate to his nature.

But then Adam had neither father nor mother! For this reason, in another sense, solitude is not natural to a human being, insofar as on entering the world he found himself not alone but among parents and siblings, and thus in a community. Consequently, love of solitude cannot exist as an original inclination, but can arise only through experience and reflection; and this will take place in proportion to the development of one's own intellectual power, but also with increasing years. Hence, on the whole, everyone's social impulse will stand in inverse proportion to his age. A small child raises cries of fear and distress as soon as it is left alone for only a few minutes. For a boy, being alone is a severe penance. Young men readily associate with one another; only the nobler and more high-minded among them already seek solitude at times, though spending an entire day alone is still difficult for them. For a grown man, by contrast, this is easy: he can already be alone a great deal, and the older he grows, the more so. The old man, left as the sole survivor of vanished generations, and having partly outgrown life's pleasures and partly become dead to them, finds in solitude his true element. In individuals, however, this increasing inclination to seclusion and solitude will always take place in proportion to their intellectual worth. For, as I have said, it is not a purely natural inclination directly aroused by needs, but merely an effect of experience and reflection upon it, especially the acquired insight into the morally and intellectually wretched constitution of the vast majority of people. The worst of this is that, in the individual, his moral and intellectual imperfections conspire and play into each other's hands, producing all kinds of highly repellent phenomena that make association with most people distasteful, indeed intolerable. Thus, although a great many things in this world are very bad, society remains the worst of them, so that even *Voltaire*, the sociable Frenchman, had to say: *The earth is covered with people who do not deserve to be spoken to*. The gentle *Petrarch*, whose love of solitude was so strong and persistent, gives the same reason for this inclination:

I have always sought a solitary life
(The riverbanks, the fields, the woods know it),
To flee these crooked, shifty minds
That have lost the road to heaven.

He develops the matter in the same spirit in his beautiful book *On the Solitary Life*, which seems to have served *Zimmermann* as a model for his famous work on solitude. *Chamfort*, in his sarcastic way, expresses precisely this merely secondary and indirect origin of unsociability when he says: *People sometimes say of a man who lives alone, "He does not like society." Often this is like saying of a man that he does not like walking, on the pretext that he does not willingly walk in the forest of Bondy in the evening[M]*. But the gentle Christian Angelus Silesius, too, says exactly the same thing in his own manner and mythical language:

"Herod is an enemy; Joseph is reason,
To whom God makes the danger known in dreams (in spirit).
The world is Bethlehem, Egypt is *solitude*:
Flee, my soul! Flee, or you will die of grief."

[M] In the same spirit, *Sadi* says in the *Gulistan* (S. die Übers. v. Graf p. 65):
"Since that time we have taken leave of society and set out on the path of seclusion, for *safety lies in solitude*."

Giordano Bruno speaks in the same spirit: *So many men who wished to taste heavenly life on earth said with one voice: "Behold, I fled far away and remained in solitude."* In the same spirit, *Sadi* the Persian reports of himself in the *Gulistan*: "Weary of my friends in Damascus, I withdrew into the desert near Jerusalem to seek the company of animals." In short, all those whom Prometheus fashioned from finer clay have spoken in the same spirit. What enjoyment can they gain from association with beings to whom they can have any relation that establishes a community only through the lowest and least noble part of their own nature—the everyday, trivial, and vulgar in it—and who, being unable to rise to their level, have no recourse but to drag them down to their own, which consequently becomes their endeavor? Thus it is an aristocratic feeling that nourishes the inclination to seclusion and solitude. All

scoundrels are pitifully sociable; the first sign, by contrast, that a person is of a nobler kind is that he takes no pleasure in others, but increasingly prefers solitude to their company, and then gradually, with the years, comes to see that, rare exceptions aside, the world offers only a choice between solitude and vulgarity. Even this, harsh as it sounds, Angelus Silesius himself, despite his Christian gentleness and love, could not leave unsaid:

“Solitude is needed; only do not be base:

Then you can be in a desert everywhere.”

As for the great minds themselves, it is surely natural that these true educators of the entire human race should feel as little inclination for frequent association with the others as a schoolmaster feels to join in the games of the noisy troop of children around him. For they have come into the world to steer it toward truth across the sea of its errors, and to draw it up from the dark abyss of its crudity and vulgarity toward the light, toward cultivation and refinement; they must indeed live among the others without really belonging to them. From youth onward, therefore, they feel themselves to be beings noticeably different from the rest, but only gradually, with the years, come to a clear understanding of the matter. They then take care that physical distance from others is added to their intellectual distance, and allow no one to come close unless he himself is already more or less exempt from the general vulgarity.

All this shows, then, that love of solitude does not appear directly, as an original impulse, but develops indirectly, especially in nobler minds, and only by degrees—not without overcoming the natural social impulse, indeed, amid occasional opposition from Mephistophelean whisperings:

“Stop toying with your grief,

Which feeds upon your life like a vulture:

The worst of company makes you feel

That you are human among humans.”

Solitude is the lot of all outstanding minds: they will sometimes sigh over it, but will always choose it as the lesser of two evils. With advancing age, however, *dare to be wise* becomes ever easier and more natural in this respect, and in one’s sixties the impulse toward solitude is truly natural, indeed instinctive. For

everything now combines to promote it. The strongest pull toward company, love of women and the sexual drive, no longer operates; indeed, the sexlessness of old age lays the foundation for a certain self-sufficiency that gradually absorbs the social impulse altogether. One has recovered from a thousand delusions and follies; active life is mostly finished; one has nothing more to expect, no more plans or intentions; the generation to which one really belongs no longer lives; surrounded by an alien generation, one is already objectively and essentially alone. Meanwhile time's flight has quickened, and one would still like to put it to intellectual use. For provided the mind has retained its strength, the abundant knowledge and experience now acquired, the gradually completed working-through of all one's thoughts, and the practiced facility of all one's powers make study of every kind more interesting and easier than ever. One sees clearly into a thousand things that formerly lay as though in mist; one reaches conclusions and feels one's full superiority. Long experience has taught one to stop expecting much from people, since, taken as a whole, they do not belong to the sort who improve on closer acquaintance. Rather, one knows that, apart from rare strokes of luck, one will encounter nothing but very defective specimens of human nature, which are better left untouched. One is therefore no longer exposed to the usual delusions, soon recognizes what each person is, and will seldom feel the wish to enter into closer relations with him. Finally, especially if one recognizes in solitude a friend from youth, the habit of isolation and of keeping one's own company has been added and become second nature. Accordingly, the love of solitude, which formerly had to be wrested from the social impulse, is now entirely natural and simple: one is in solitude like a fish in water. Thus every excellent individuality, being consequently unlike the rest and therefore standing alone, feels oppressed in youth by this essential isolation, but relieved by it in old age.

Of course, everyone will enjoy this genuine advantage of age only in proportion to his intellectual powers, and thus the eminent mind above all; yet probably everyone does so to a lesser degree. Only extremely impoverished and vulgar

natures will be as sociable in old age as before: they are burdensome to the company into which they no longer fit, and achieve at most being tolerated, whereas formerly they were sought out.

A teleological aspect can also be found in the inverse relation, just described, between the number of our years and the degree of our sociability. The younger a person is, the more he still has to learn in every respect. Now nature has directed him to the mutual instruction everyone receives through association with his fellows, with regard to which human society may be called a great Bell-Lancaster educational establishment, whereas books and schools are artificial institutions, since they lie outside nature's plan. It is therefore entirely fitting that the younger he is, the more diligently he attends the natural place of instruction.

Nothing is blessed in every respect, says Horace, and "No lotus without a stem," runs an Indian proverb. Thus solitude, too, alongside so many advantages, has its small disadvantages and troubles, which, however, are slight compared with those of society; hence anyone who has something substantial within himself will always find it easier to manage without people than with them.—Among those disadvantages, however, there is one less readily brought to consciousness than the others, namely this: just as continually staying at home makes our body so sensitive to external influences that every cool breath of air affects it unhealthily, so prolonged seclusion and solitude make our feelings so sensitive that we feel disturbed, offended, or hurt by the most insignificant incidents, words, or even mere facial expressions; whereas someone who always remains amid the bustle takes no notice of such things.

But anyone, especially in his younger years, who, however often a justified displeasure with people has already driven him back into solitude, still cannot bear its desolation for long, I advise to accustom himself to taking a portion of his solitude into company. That is, he should learn to be alone to a certain degree even in company, and accordingly not immediately communicate his thoughts to others; on the other hand, he should not be too particular about what they say, but instead expect little of it, morally or intellectually, and thus strengthen in himself, toward their opinions, the indifference that is the surest means of

always practicing a praiseworthy tolerance. Then, though in their midst, he will still not be entirely in their company, but will instead maintain a more purely objective attitude toward them. This will protect him from too close a contact with society, and thereby from any contamination or even injury. We even possess a dramatic portrayal worth reading of this restricted or entrenched sociability in *Moratin's* comedy *The Café, or the New Comedy*, in the character of Don Pedro, especially in the second and third scenes of the first act. In this sense, company may also be compared to a fire at which the wise person warms himself at a proper distance, without reaching into it like the fool, who then, after burning himself, flees into the cold of solitude and laments that fire burns.

¹⁰ *Envy* is natural to human beings; nevertheless it is both a vice and a misfortune[N]. We should therefore regard it as the enemy of our happiness and seek to stifle it like an evil demon. *Seneca* directs us toward this with the beautiful words: *Let what is ours delight us without comparison: a man will never be happy if someone happier torments him* (de ira III, 30), and again: *When you have looked at how many are ahead of you, think how many follow behind* (ep. 15). Thus we should look more often at those who are worse off than ourselves than at those who seem better off. Indeed, when real evils have befallen us, the most effective consolation, though flowing from the same source as envy, will be afforded by contemplating sufferings greater than our own, and next by associating with those who find themselves in the same situation as we do, with our *companions in misfortune*.

[N] People's *envy* shows how unhappy they feel; their constant *attention* to what others do and leave undone shows how bored they are.

So much for the active side of envy. On its passive side, we should consider that no hatred is as implacable as envy; hence we should not strive incessantly and eagerly to arouse it, but would do better to deny ourselves this pleasure, like many another, because of its dangerous consequences.—There are *three aristocracies*: 1. that of birth and rank, 2. the aristocracy of wealth, 3. the intellectual aristocracy. The last is really the most distinguished, and will be acknowledged as such if only it is given time. Frederick the Great himself said: *Privileged souls*

rank as the equals of sovereigns—and said it to his court marshal, who objected that, while ministers and generals ate at the marshal’s table, Voltaire was to take a place at a table occupied only by reigning sovereigns and their princes.—Each of these aristocracies is surrounded by an army of envious people, secretly embittered against every one of its members and, if they have no reason to fear him, striving in various ways to give him to understand, “You are no more than we are!” But these very efforts betray their conviction of the opposite. The course the envied person should take in response consists in keeping all members of this host at a distance and avoiding every contact with them as far as possible, so that a wide gulf keeps them apart; where this is not possible, it consists in bearing their efforts with the utmost composure, since their source itself neutralizes them. And we do indeed see this course consistently followed. Those belonging to one aristocracy, on the other hand, will generally get along well and without envy with those of either of the other two, because each sets his own advantage in the balance against the other’s.

- 11 Before putting a plan into action, consider it maturely and repeatedly; and even after thinking everything through most thoroughly, still make some allowance for the inadequacy of all human knowledge, owing to which there may always be circumstances impossible to discover or foresee that could invalidate the entire calculation. This consideration will always put a weight in the negative pan of the scales and advise us, in important matters, to disturb nothing without necessity: *Do not move what is at rest*. But once we have reached a decision and put our hand to the work, so that everything must now take its course and only the outcome remains to be awaited, we should not torment ourselves by constantly reconsidering what has already been done and repeatedly pondering the possible danger. Rather, we should now put the matter entirely out of mind, keep its whole compartment of thought closed, and reassure ourselves with the conviction that we considered everything maturely at the proper time. This advice is also given by the Italian proverb *Tie it well, and then let it go*, which Goethe translates as “Saddle well, and ride with confidence”—just as, incidentally, a large proportion of the maxims he gives under the heading

“Proverbial” are translated Italian proverbs.—If a bad outcome nevertheless comes, it is because all human affairs are subject to chance and error. That *Socrates*, the wisest of men, needed a warning *daimonion* merely to make the right choice in his own personal affairs, or at least to avoid missteps, proves that no human understanding suffices for this. Hence the saying, supposedly originating with a pope, that we ourselves bear at least some blame for every misfortune that befalls us, is not unconditionally true in every case, although it is in by far the most. Indeed, a feeling of this seems to play a large part in people’s attempts to conceal their unhappiness as far as possible and put on a contented face as far as they can. They fear that others will infer guilt from suffering.

- ¹² When an unfortunate event has already occurred and can therefore no longer be changed, we should not even allow ourselves the thought that things could be otherwise, still less the thought of how it could have been prevented; for this is precisely what heightens the pain to the unbearable, so that we become our own tormentors. Rather, we should act like King David, who, as long as his son lay sick, unceasingly besieged Jehovah with prayers and entreaties, but when the boy was dead snapped his fingers and gave it no further thought. Anyone not lighthearted enough for this should take refuge in the fatalistic standpoint, making clear to himself the great truth that everything that happens occurs necessarily, and is therefore unavoidable.

For all that, this rule is one-sided. It is useful, certainly, for our immediate relief and reassurance in misfortune; but if, as is usually the case, our own carelessness or rashness is at least partly to blame, repeated, painful reflection on how it could have been prevented is a salutary self-chastisement for our instruction and improvement, and thus for the future. And when we have committed obvious mistakes, we should not, as we generally do, try to excuse, embellish, or minimize them to ourselves, but admit them and set them clearly before our eyes in their full magnitude, so as to form a firm resolve to avoid them in future. Admittedly, in doing so we must inflict on ourselves the great pain of dissatisfaction with ourselves; but a person who is not beaten is not educated.

13 In everything that concerns our well-being or misery, we should *keep the imagination on a tight rein*: first of all, then, build no castles in the air, because they are too costly, since immediately afterward we must tear them down again amid sighs. But even more should we guard against frightening our hearts by painting pictures of merely possible misfortunes. For if these were wholly plucked out of the air, or at least very far-fetched, then on waking from such a dream we would immediately know that it had all been mere illusion, and would therefore rejoice all the more in the better reality, perhaps taking from it a warning against very remote though possible misfortunes. But our imagination does not readily play with such things: in a wholly idle way it builds, at most, cheerful castles in the air. The material for its dark dreams consists of misfortunes that, however remotely, do to some extent really threaten us: these it enlarges, brings their possibility much closer than it truly is, and paints them in the most terrifying colors. On waking, we cannot shake off such a dream as readily as a cheerful one; for reality immediately refutes the latter and leaves at most a faint hope in the lap of possibility. But if we have surrendered ourselves to dark fantasies (*blue devils*), they have brought images close to us that do not readily withdraw again: for the possibility of the thing in general is established, and we cannot at all times apply a measure to its degree. It now easily becomes a probability, and we have delivered ourselves into the hands of fear. We should therefore consider things that concern our well-being or misery solely with the eye of reason and judgment, and consequently operate by dry, cool deliberation, with mere concepts and *in the abstract*. The imagination should be kept out of the game, for it cannot judge, but merely sets images before our eyes that move our feelings uselessly and often very painfully. This rule should be observed most strictly in the evening. For just as darkness makes us fearful and causes us to see terrifying shapes everywhere, so, analogously, does indistinctness of thought, because every uncertainty breeds insecurity. Thus in the evening, when exhaustion has overlaid understanding and judgment with a subjective darkness, when the intellect is tired and agitated and cannot get to the bottom of things, the objects of our meditation, if they concern our personal circumstances, readily take on a dangerous appearance and turn into phantoms of terror. This hap-

pens most of all at night in bed, when the mind is wholly exhausted and judgment therefore no longer equal to its task, while the imagination is still active. Then night gives everything its black coloring. Hence our thoughts before falling asleep, or even on waking during the night, are generally almost as grievous distortions and perversions of things as dreams are, and, if they concern personal affairs, usually pitch-black, indeed horrifying. By morning all such phantoms of terror have vanished, just like dreams; this is the meaning of the Spanish proverb: *Night is tinted, day is white* (the night is colored, the day is white). But even in the evening, as soon as the light is lit, the understanding, like the eye, does not see as clearly as by day: this time is therefore unsuitable for meditation on serious, especially unpleasant, affairs. Morning is the right time for this, as indeed it is for all accomplishments without exception, intellectual as well as physical. For morning is the youth of the day: everything is cheerful, fresh, and easy; we feel strong and have all our faculties entirely at our disposal. We should not shorten it by getting up late, nor squander it on unworthy occupations or conversations, but regard it as the quintessence of life and keep it, in a sense, sacred. Evening, by contrast, is the old age of the day: in the evening we are weary, talkative, and frivolous.—Every *day is a little life*—every waking and rising a little birth, every fresh morning a little youth, and every going to bed and falling asleep a little death.

In general, however, our state of health, sleep, nourishment, temperature, weather, surroundings, and much else that is external exert a powerful influence on our mood, and this in turn on our thoughts. Hence our view of a matter, like our capacity for an achievement, is so dependent on time and even place. Therefore,

“Make use of a good mood,
For it comes so seldom.”

G.

We must wait to see whether and when objective conceptions and original thoughts choose to come; even thorough consideration of a personal matter does not always succeed at the time we have appointed in advance and sat down

for it. It too chooses its own time, when the train of thought appropriate to it awakens unbidden and we follow it with full involvement.

The recommended restraint of the imagination also means not allowing it to bring back before us and paint anew injustices, damage, losses, insults, slights, hurts, and the like that we suffered in the past, because in doing so we reawaken long-dormant indignation, anger, and all the hateful passions, polluting our inner life. For, according to a beautiful analogy offered by the Neoplatonist Proclus, just as every city contains, alongside its noble and distinguished inhabitants, a rabble of every kind, so in every person, even the noblest and most elevated, all that is lowest and most vulgar in human, indeed animal, nature is present as a disposition. This rabble must not be stirred to riot, nor allowed to look out of the windows, since it makes an ugly sight; but the imaginative scenes just described are its demagogues. Here too belongs the fact that the smallest vexation, whether originating in people or things, can swell into a monster that drives us out of our minds if we keep brooding over it and painting it in glaring colors on an enlarged scale. Rather, we should view everything unpleasant as prosaically and soberly as possible, so that we can take it as lightly as possible.

Just as small objects held close to the eye restrict our field of vision and hide the world, so the people and things in our *immediate surroundings*, however utterly insignificant and unimportant they may be, will often occupy our attention and thoughts beyond all due measure, and in an unpleasing way at that, displacing important thoughts and affairs. We should work against this.

- ¹⁴ At the sight of something we do not possess, the thought very readily rises in us: “What if that were mine?” and makes us feel the lack of it. Instead, we should ask more often: “What if that were *not* mine?” I mean that we should sometimes try to look at what we possess as it would appear to us after we had lost it—and everything, whatever it may be: property, health, friends, beloved, wife, child, horse, and dog; for usually only loss teaches us the value of things. By contrast, the recommended way of considering them will, first, immediately make their possession give us more happiness than before, and second, make us

take every precaution against losing them: not endangering our property, not angering our friends, not exposing our wife's fidelity to temptation, watching over our children's health, and so on.—We often seek to brighten the gloom of the present by speculating on favorable possibilities, and invent all kinds of chimerical hopes, each pregnant with a disappointment that will not fail to arrive when the hope shatters against harsh reality. It would be better to make the many unfavorable possibilities the object of our speculation, since this would lead partly to precautions against them and partly to pleasant surprises when they do not materialize. After all, we are always noticeably cheerful after enduring a certain amount of fear. Indeed, it is even good occasionally to picture great misfortunes that might possibly befall us, in order to bear more easily the much smaller ones that actually do befall us afterward, since we can then console ourselves by looking back at those great ones that did not occur. Yet in following this rule, we must not neglect the one preceding it.

- ¹⁵ Because the affairs and events that concern us appear and run across one another quite separately, without order or relation to one another, in the starkest contrast, with nothing in common except that they are our affairs, our thinking and worrying about them must be equally abrupt if it is to match them.—Accordingly, when we take up one matter, we must abstract from all the rest and dismiss them from our minds, so as to attend to, enjoy, or endure each thing in its own time, wholly unconcerned with the remainder: we must have drawers, as it were, for our thoughts, opening one while all the others remain closed. In this way we ensure that a heavily pressing care does not blight every small enjoyment of the present and rob us of all peace; that one deliberation does not displace another; that concern for one important affair does not lead to neglect of many lesser ones, and so on. Above all, however, anyone capable of lofty and noble reflections should never allow his mind to be so entirely occupied and filled by personal affairs and low concerns that they bar those reflections from entering: for that would truly be to lose, for life's sake, the reasons for living.—Admittedly, this directing and redirecting of ourselves, like so much else, requires self-restraint; but we should be strengthened in it by the

reflection that everyone must endure a great deal of severe external constraint, without which no life passes, while a little self-restraint applied in the right place prevents much external constraint later on, just as a small arc of a circle close to the center corresponds to an arc often a hundred times greater at the circumference. Nothing frees us so much from external constraint as self-restraint: this is what Seneca's saying means: *If you wish to subject everything to yourself, subject yourself to reason* (ep. 37). Moreover, self-restraint always remains in our power, and in an extreme case, or where it touches our most sensitive point, we can ease it somewhat; external constraint, by contrast, is inconsiderate, unrelenting, and merciless. It is therefore wise to forestall the latter by means of the former.

- ¹⁶ To set a limit to our wishes, keep our desires in check, tame our anger, always remembering that only an infinitely small portion of all that is desirable is attainable by the individual, whereas many evils must befall everyone—in a word, to refrain and endure, *abstain and endure*—is a rule without whose observance neither wealth nor power can prevent us from feeling wretched. This is what Horace means:

In all you do, read and inquire of the learned
How you may pass your life in quiet ease;
Lest ever-needy desire harass and torment you,
Or fear, or hope for things of middling use.

- ¹⁷ “Life consists in motion” (*Life is sustained by movement*), says Aristotle, with evident justice; and just as our physical life therefore exists only in and through unceasing movement, so our inner, intellectual life continually requires occupation—occupation with something, through doing or thinking. Evidence of this is already supplied by the drumming with hands or some implement to which unoccupied and thoughtless people immediately resort. For our existence is essentially restless: hence complete inactivity soon becomes intolerable to us by producing the most dreadful boredom. We should regulate this impulse, then, so as to satisfy it methodically, and thereby better. Thus activity, pursuing something, if possible making something, but at least learning some-

thing, is indispensable to human happiness: our powers demand to be used, and we would like to perceive the result of their use in some way. In this respect, however, the greatest satisfaction comes from *making* something, producing it, whether a basket or a book; to see a work grow daily under our hands and finally reach completion gives immediate happiness. A work of art, a piece of writing, even mere handiwork, supplies this; admittedly, the nobler the kind of work, the higher the enjoyment. Happiest in this respect are the highly gifted, who are conscious of their capacity to produce significant, great, and coherent works. For through this, an interest of a higher kind spreads over their entire existence and gives it a flavor lacking in that of the others, which, compared with theirs, is therefore quite insipid. For them, life and the world possess, besides the material interest common to all, a second and higher, a formal interest, since they contain the material for their works, which they are busily engaged in collecting throughout their lives whenever personal need gives them any breathing room. Their intellect, too, is in a sense twofold: one part for ordinary relationships—the affairs of the will—like everyone else's; another for the purely objective apprehension of things. Thus they live a double life, spectators and actors at once, while the rest are only the latter.—Meanwhile, let everyone pursue something in accordance with his abilities. For how harmfully the lack of purposeful activity, of some kind of work, affects us becomes apparent on long pleasure trips, when from time to time we feel positively unhappy, because without a real occupation we have been torn, as it were, from our natural element. To toil and struggle against resistance is as necessary to a human being as digging is to a mole. The standstill brought about by the all-sufficiency of lasting enjoyment would be intolerable to him. Overcoming obstacles is the fullest enjoyment of his existence, whether they are material, as in action and business, or intellectual, as in learning and research: struggling with them and winning makes him happy. If he lacks the opportunity, he creates it as he can: according to his individuality, he will hunt, play cup-and-ball, or, guided by the unconscious pull of his nature, seek quarrels, spin intrigues, or engage in frauds and all kinds of villainy, merely to put an end to the state of rest he finds intolerable. *Peace is difficult in idleness.*

18 We should take not *images of the imagination* but clearly conceived *concepts* as the guiding star of our endeavors. Yet the reverse usually happens. For on closer examination we shall find that what ultimately tips the balance in our decisions is generally not concepts and judgments, but an imagined picture representing and standing for one of the alternatives. I no longer remember in which novel by Voltaire or Diderot, when the hero was a young man, a Hercules at the crossroads, virtue always appeared to him in the shape of his old tutor, holding a snuffbox in his left hand and a pinch of snuff in his right, moralizing in this posture; vice, on the other hand, appeared in the shape of his mother's chambermaid.—Especially in youth, the goal of our happiness becomes fixed in the form of certain pictures that float before us and often persist through half, indeed the whole, of life. They are really teasing phantoms: for once we have reached them, they dissolve into nothing as we discover that they deliver none of what they promised. Such are particular scenes of domestic, civic, social, or rural life; pictures of home, surroundings, decorations of honor, marks of respect, and so on and so on. *Every fool has his hobbyhorse*; the image of the beloved often belongs here too. It is surely natural that we should fare this way: for what is perceived, being immediate, also acts more immediately on our will than a concept, an abstract thought, which gives only the universal without the particular, even though it is precisely the particular that contains reality; it can therefore act on our will only indirectly. And yet it is the concept alone that keeps its word; hence it is a mark of cultivation to trust only it. Admittedly, it may sometimes need illustration and paraphrase through a few images, but only *with a grain of salt*.

19 The preceding rule can be subsumed under the more general one that we should everywhere master the impression made by what is present and, in general, directly perceived. Compared with what is merely thought and known, this impression is disproportionately strong, not by virtue of its matter and content, which are often very slight, but by virtue of its form, its perceptibility and immediacy, which presses upon our feelings and disturbs their peace or shakes their resolutions. For what is present, what is perceived, being easily

taken in at a glance, always acts with its whole force at once; thoughts and reasons, by contrast, require time and quiet to be thought through piece by piece, so that we cannot have them wholly present at every moment. Consequently, something pleasant that we have renounced after reflection still tempts us at the sight of it; likewise, a judgment whose complete incompetence we know still hurts us; an insult whose contemptibility we recognize still angers us; likewise, ten reasons against the existence of a danger are outweighed by the false appearance of its actual presence, and so on. In all these cases, the original irrationality of our nature asserts itself. Women, too, will often succumb to an impression of this kind, and few men possess such a predominance of reason that they do not suffer from its effects. Where we cannot entirely overcome it by mere thoughts, the best course is to neutralize one impression by its opposite: for example, the impression of an insult by seeking out those who esteem us; the impression of a threatening danger by actually contemplating what counteracts it. Even that Italian of whom Leibniz tells us (in the *nouveaux essais*, Liv. I, c. 2, § 11) was able to withstand the pains of torture by never, throughout it, letting the image of the gallows to which his confession would have brought him escape his imagination for a moment, as he had resolved; for this reason he cried from time to time, *I see you*—words he later explained in this way.—For the very reason considered here, when all those around us hold a different opinion and behave accordingly, it is difficult not to be shaken by them, even when we are convinced of their error. To a fugitive, persecuted king traveling in earnest *incognito*, the ceremonial deference shown in private by his trusted companion must be an almost necessary strengthening of the heart, lest he end by doubting himself.

- ²⁰ Having already emphasized in the second chapter the high value of *health*, as the first and most important thing for our happiness, I shall give here a few very general rules of conduct for strengthening and preserving it.

We should harden ourselves by imposing plenty of exertion and hardship on the body, both as a whole and in every part, as long as we are healthy, and by accustoming ourselves to resist adverse influences of every kind. But as soon as

an unhealthy condition makes itself known, whether in the whole or in one part, we must immediately adopt the opposite procedure and spare and tend the sick body, or part of it, in every way; for what is suffering and weakened cannot be hardened.

A muscle is strengthened by vigorous use; a nerve, by contrast, is weakened by it. Thus we should exercise our muscles through every suitable exertion, but protect the nerves from all such strain: the eyes, then, from overly bright, especially reflected light, from every exertion in twilight, and from prolonged looking at objects that are too small; likewise the ears from excessive noise; but above all the brain from forced, overprolonged, or ill-timed exertion. Accordingly, we should let it rest during digestion, because the very same vital force that forms thoughts in the brain is then working strenuously in the stomach and intestines to prepare chyme and chyle; likewise during, or even after, considerable muscular exertion. For the motor nerves behave like the sensory ones; and just as the pain we feel in injured limbs has its true seat in the brain, so it is not really the legs and arms that walk and work, but the brain—namely the part of it that, by way of the medulla oblongata and spinal cord, excites the nerves of those limbs and thereby sets them in motion. Accordingly, the fatigue we feel in our legs or arms also has its true seat in the brain; for this very reason only those muscles whose movement is voluntary, that is, proceeds from the brain, grow tired, whereas those that work involuntarily, like the heart, do not. Clearly, then, the brain is impaired if we force it to perform strenuous muscular activity and intellectual exertion at the same time, or even in close succession. This does not conflict with the fact that at the beginning of a walk, or on short walks in general, we often feel heightened mental activity: for then the brain parts in question have not yet become fatigued, and on the other hand, such light muscular activity and the increased respiration it causes promote the ascent to the brain of arterial blood, now also better oxygenated.—Above all, however, we should give the brain the full measure of sleep needed for its restoration; for sleep is to the whole person what winding is to a clock. (Vergl. *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* II, 217.—3. Aufl. II, 240.) This measure will be greater the more developed and active the brain is; to exceed it, however, would

merely waste time, because sleep then loses in intensity what it gains in extent. (Vergl. *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* II, 247.—3. Aufl. II, 275.)[O] In general, we should understand clearly that our thinking is nothing but the organic function of the brain, and accordingly behaves analogously to every other organic activity with respect to exertion and rest. As excessive strain damages the eyes, so it damages the brain. It has rightly been said that the brain thinks as the stomach digests. The delusion of an immaterial, simple soul, essentially and always thinking, and consequently untiring, which merely lodges in the brain and needs nothing in the world, has certainly led many to senseless practices and the blunting of their intellectual powers—as, for example, Frederick the Great once tried to give up sleeping altogether. Professors of philosophy would do well not to promote such a delusion, ruinous even in practice, through their distaff philosophy that aims to conform to the catechism.—We should accustom ourselves to regarding our intellectual powers entirely as physiological functions, so as to treat, spare, exert them, and so on accordingly, and to remember that every physical suffering, discomfort, or disorder, in whatever part, affects the mind. The best preparation for this is *Cabanis, On the Relations between the Physical and Moral Aspects of Man*.

[O] Sleep is a piece of *death* that we borrow *in advance*, receiving in exchange the renewal and restoration of the life exhausted by a day. *Sleep is a loan taken out from death*. Sleep borrows from death to maintain life. Or: it is the *interim interest* on death, which itself is repayment of the principal. The more generous the interest and the more regularly it is paid, the later that repayment will be demanded.

Neglect of the advice given here is the reason some great minds, and great scholars too, have become feeble-minded, childish, and even insane in old age. That the celebrated English poets of this century, for example, such as *Walter Scott, Wordsworth, Southey*, and others, became mentally dull and incapable in old age, indeed already in their sixties, and even sank into imbecility, is doubtless to be explained by their all having practiced authorship as a trade, lured by high fees, and thus having written for money. This tempts one to unnatural exertion; and whoever harnesses his Pegasus to the yoke and drives his Muse with a

whip will pay for it in a way analogous to someone who has rendered forced service to Venus. I suspect that *Kant*, too, in his later years, after at last becoming famous, overworked himself and thereby brought on the second childhood of his final four years.—

Every month of the year has a distinctive and immediate influence—that is, one independent of the weather—on our health, our physical condition generally, and indeed our mental condition too.

C. Concerning our conduct toward others.

- ²¹ To make one's way through the world, it is advisable to take along a large supply of *caution* and *forbearance*: the former protects us from damage and loss, the latter from disputes and quarrels.

Anyone who must live among people must not unconditionally reject any individuality, since it has once and for all been established and given by nature—not even the worst, most pitiful, or most ridiculous. Rather, he must take it as something unalterable, which, in consequence of an eternal and metaphysical principle, must be as it is; and in bad cases he should think: “There must be such odd creatures too.” If he does otherwise, he commits an injustice and challenges the other person to a war to the death. For no one can change his essential individuality: his moral character, powers of understanding, temperament, physiognomy, and so forth. If we condemn his nature entirely, he has no recourse but to fight us as a mortal enemy, for we are willing to grant him the right to exist only on condition that he become someone other than he unalterably is. To be able to live among people, then, we must allow everyone, with his given individuality, however it may have turned out, to exist and count for something, and may concern ourselves only with making use of it as its kind and constitution permit; we must neither hope to change it nor condemn it outright as it is[P]. This is the true meaning of the saying “Live and let live.” The task, however, is not as easy as it is just, and anyone who can avoid a good many individualities forever should count himself fortunate.—Meanwhile, to learn to endure people, we should exercise our patience on inanimate objects that stubbornly resist our actions by mechanical or other physical necessity, for

which there is daily opportunity. We afterward learn to transfer the patience acquired in this way to people by accustoming ourselves to think that whenever they obstruct us, they too must do so by a necessity arising from their nature just as strict as that by which inanimate things act; hence it is as foolish to grow indignant at what they do as at a stone that rolls into our path.

[P] With some people, the wisest thought is: "I shall not change him, so I shall make use of him."

- 22 It is astonishing how easily and quickly similarity or dissimilarity of intellect and disposition reveals itself between people in conversation: it makes itself felt in every trifle. Even if the conversation concerns the most remote, indifferent things, between essentially dissimilar people almost every sentence spoken by one will more or less displease the other, and some will positively annoy him. Similar people, by contrast, immediately feel a certain agreement in everything, which, where the similarity is great, soon flows into perfect harmony, indeed into unison. This explains, first, why entirely ordinary people are so sociable and so easily find very good company everywhere—such thoroughly dear, decent people. With the unusual it is the reverse, and all the more so the more distinguished they are; so that in their isolation they can sometimes positively rejoice to have discovered in another person even a single fiber akin to themselves, however small it may be! For each person can be only as much to the other as the other is to him. Truly great minds, like eagles on the heights, nest alone.—Second, this makes it understandable how like-minded people find one another so quickly, as if drawn together magnetically: kindred souls greet each other from afar. Admittedly, one will most often have occasion to observe this among the base-minded or poorly endowed, but only because they exist in legions, whereas better and more excellent natures are, and are called, rare. Accordingly, in a large association directed toward practical ends, for example, two genuine scoundrels will recognize each other as quickly as though they wore a field insignia, and will immediately join forces to plot abuse or betrayal. Likewise, if we imagine, *impossible though it may be*, a large gathering composed entirely of very sensible and intelligent people, except for two fools who were

also there, these two will feel drawn toward each other by sympathy, and soon each will rejoice in his heart to have met at least one reasonable man after all. It is truly remarkable to witness how two people, especially from among the morally and intellectually backward, recognize each other at first sight, eagerly strive to approach, and rush toward each other with friendly, joyful greetings, as though they were old acquaintances; so striking is it that one is tempted, in accordance with the Buddhist doctrine of transmigration, to suppose that they had already been friends in a former life.

What keeps people apart, however, even where there is much agreement, and may also produce temporary disharmony between them, is the difference in their present moods, which are almost always different for each person, according to his present circumstances, occupation, surroundings, physical condition, current train of thought, and so on. From this arise dissonances between the most harmonious personalities. To be able always to make the correction needed to remove this disturbance and introduce an equal temperament would be an achievement of the highest cultivation. How much a shared mood contributes to social intercourse can be gauged from the fact that even a large gathering is stirred to lively mutual communication and sincere interest, amid universal contentment, as soon as something objective—a danger, a hope, a piece of news, an unusual sight, a play, music, or anything else—acts upon everyone at once and in the same way. For such a thing, by overpowering all private interests, produces a universal unity of mood. In the absence of such an objective influence, a subjective one is generally adopted, and bottles are accordingly the usual means of bringing a shared mood into company. Even tea and coffee serve this purpose.

Yet this very disharmony, which differences of momentary mood so readily introduce into every association, partly explains why everyone appears idealized, indeed sometimes almost transfigured, in memory, which is free from this and all similar disturbing, though passing, influences. Memory works like the converging lens in a camera obscura: it draws everything together and thereby produces a much more beautiful image than its original. We gain the advantage of being seen in this way partly through any absence. For although idealizing

memory needs a considerable time to complete its work, it begins at once. For this reason it is even wise to appear before one's acquaintances and good friends only at substantial intervals; on meeting them again, one will then notice that memory has already been at work.

- ²³ No one can see *above himself*. By this I mean that everyone sees in another only as much as he himself is; for he can grasp and understand him only in proportion to his own intelligence. If this is of the lowest kind, all intellectual gifts, even the greatest, will fail to have any effect on him, and in their possessor he will perceive only what is lowest in his individuality: all his weaknesses, faults of temperament and character. For him, these will make up the man. The other's higher intellectual powers have no more existence for him than color does for the blind. For all minds are invisible to someone who has none; and every estimation is the product of the worth of what is esteemed multiplied by the estimator's range of understanding. It follows that we level ourselves with everyone to whom we speak, since everything in which we may surpass him disappears, and even the self-denial required for this remains entirely unrecognized. If we now consider how thoroughly low-minded and poorly endowed, and thus how thoroughly *common*, most people are, we shall see that it is impossible to speak with them without, for that time, becoming *common* ourselves, by analogy with electrostatic induction. We shall then thoroughly understand the true sense and aptness of the expression "making oneself common," but also gladly avoid any company with which we can communicate only through the *shameful part* of our nature. We shall also see that, in the presence of dullards and fools, there is only *one* way to display our understanding, and that is not to talk to them. Admittedly, however, in company some people will then sometimes feel like a dancer who has come to a ball and found nothing but people who are lame: with whom is he to dance?

- ²⁴ *That* person wins my high esteem, as one chosen out of a hundred, who, when he has something to wait for and is therefore sitting unoccupied, does not immediately begin rhythmically tapping or rattling whatever happens to come to hand—his stick, perhaps, or knife and fork, or anything else. He is probably

thinking about something. Many people, by contrast, plainly show that seeing has entirely taken the place of thinking in them: they seek to make themselves conscious of their existence by rattling, if, that is, there is no cigar at hand, which serves precisely the same purpose. For the same reason they are also constantly all eyes and ears for everything happening around them.

²⁵ *Rochefoucauld* aptly observed that it is difficult to esteem someone highly and love him greatly at the same time. Accordingly, we would have to choose whether to seek people's love or their esteem. Their love is always self-interested, though in very different ways. Moreover, the means by which it is gained are not always such as to make us proud. A person will chiefly be liked in proportion to how low he sets his demands on the minds and hearts of others—and does so in earnest, without pretense, and not merely from the forbearance rooted in contempt. If we now recall *Helvétius's* very true saying, *The degree of intelligence needed to please us is a fairly exact measure of the degree of intelligence we possess*, the conclusion follows from these premises.—With people's esteem, by contrast, it is the reverse: it is wrested from them only against their will, and for that very reason is generally concealed. Hence it gives us inwardly a much greater satisfaction: it is connected with our worth, which does not directly hold of people's love, for love is subjective, esteem objective. Love, of course, is more useful to us.

²⁶ Most people are so subjective that fundamentally nothing interests them except themselves alone. Hence, at everything said, they immediately think of themselves, and every accidental connection, however remote, with something personal to them seizes and occupies their whole attention, so that they have no power of comprehension left for the objective subject of the conversation; likewise, no reasons carry any weight with them as soon as their interest or vanity opposes them. Thus they are so easily distracted, so easily hurt, insulted, or offended that, when speaking objectively with them about anything at all, one cannot take enough care against any possible, perhaps unfavorable, connections between what is said and the precious, delicate self before one. For this alone concerns them, and nothing else; and while they have no sense or feeling for the

truth and aptness, or beauty, subtlety, and wit of another person's speech, they are exquisitely sensitive to anything that might, even in the remotest or most indirect way, wound their petty vanity or reflect at all unfavorably upon their supremely precious self. In their vulnerability they resemble little dogs whose paws one so easily steps on without intending to, and must then listen to the squealing; or they may be compared to a sick person covered with wounds and boils, with whom one must most cautiously avoid every possible touch. With some, however, the matter goes so far that they feel intelligence and understanding displayed in conversation with them, or at least not sufficiently concealed, as a downright insult, though for the time being they still hide it; afterward, the inexperienced person vainly wonders and broods over how on earth he could have incurred their resentment and hatred.—But they are just as easily flattered and won over. Hence their judgment is generally bribed, and is merely a pronouncement in favor of their party or class, not an objective and just one. All this rests on the fact that in them the will far outweighs knowledge, and their scant intellect stands entirely in the will's service, unable to free itself from it even for a moment.

A magnificent proof of people's pitiful subjectivity, in consequence of which they relate everything to themselves and return in a straight line from every thought to themselves, is supplied by *astrology*, which relates the courses of the great celestial bodies to the miserable ego, and also connects comets in the sky with earthly squabbles and rascalities. Yet this has been done at all times, even in the most ancient. (S. z. B. Stob. Eclog. L. I, c. 22, 9, pag. 478.)

- ²⁷ Whenever some absurdity is spoken in public or in company, or written in literature, and well received, or at least not refuted, we should not despair and suppose that matters will now rest there. Rather, we should know and take comfort in the fact that afterward, and gradually, the matter will be ruminated upon, illuminated, considered, weighed, discussed, and usually judged correctly in the end; so that, after an interval proportionate to its difficulty, almost everyone will finally grasp what the clear mind saw at once. Meanwhile, of course, we must be patient. For a man of sound insight among the deluded resembles

someone whose watch keeps the right time in a town where all the tower clocks are set wrong. He alone knows the true time, but what good does it do him? Everyone goes by the town clocks that show it falsely—even those who know that his watch alone gives the true time.

- 28 People resemble children in becoming naughty when spoiled; hence we must not be too indulgent or affectionate toward anyone. Just as we will generally not lose a friend by refusing him a loan, but very easily by giving it, so we will not easily lose one through proud and somewhat neglectful behavior, but often through too much friendliness and obligingness, which make him arrogant and unbearable, thereby bringing about the breach. Above all, people simply cannot bear the thought that we need them: insolence and presumption are its inseparable followers. In some this thought arises, to a certain degree, merely because we associate with them, perhaps speaking with them often or in a familiar manner: immediately they will suppose that we must also put up with something from them, and will try to extend the bounds of politeness. Hence so few are suited to any closer association, and we should take special care not to make ourselves familiar with low natures. But if someone actually forms the idea that he is much more necessary to me than I am to him, he immediately feels as though I had stolen something from him: he will seek revenge and try to get it back. *Superiority* in personal dealings arises solely from not needing others in any way, and letting this be seen. For this reason, it is advisable to make everyone, man or woman, feel from time to time that we could manage perfectly well without them: this strengthens friendship. Indeed, with most people it can do no harm to let a grain of disdain toward them slip in now and then; they will value our friendship all the more. *He who does not esteem is esteemed* (whoever does not show regard is regarded), says a shrewd Italian proverb. But if someone is genuinely of very great value to us, we must conceal this from him as though it were a crime. This is not exactly pleasing, but it is true. Dogs can scarcely bear great friendliness, let alone human beings.

29 That people of a nobler kind and higher gifts so often betray a striking lack of knowledge of people and worldly wisdom, especially in youth, and are therefore easily deceived or otherwise misled, while low natures find their way in the world much faster and better, is because, in the absence of experience, we must judge *a priori*, and because, in general, no experience can equal the *a priori*. For their own selves put this *a priori* into the hands of those of the ordinary sort, but not into those of the noble and excellent, since precisely as such they differ widely from the others. Thus when they calculate others' thinking and actions according to their own, the calculation does not come out right.

But even when such a person has finally learned *a posteriori*, that is, through instruction from others and his own experience, what is to be expected of people taken as a whole—namely, that about 5/6 of them are so constituted, morally or intellectually, that anyone not brought into connection with them by circumstances does better to avoid them from the outset and, as far as possible, remain entirely out of contact with them—he will nevertheless scarcely ever attain an *adequate* conception of their pettiness and wretchedness, but will continually have to extend and complete it as long as he lives, meanwhile very often miscalculating to his own detriment. And then again, even after he has truly taken the instruction received to heart, it will still sometimes happen that, on entering a gathering of people as yet unknown to him, he has to wonder how they all, judging by their speech and expressions, appear quite reasonable, honest, sincere, honorable, and virtuous, and perhaps even clever and intelligent as well. Yet this should not mislead him: it comes merely from nature's not proceeding like bad poets, who, when depicting scoundrels or fools, go about it so clumsily and pointedly that behind each such character we seem to see the poet standing, continually disavowing his sentiments and speech and crying in a warning voice: "This is a scoundrel, this is a fool; put no trust in what he says." Nature, by contrast, proceeds like Shakespeare and Goethe, in whose works every character, even if it is the devil himself, remains in the right while he stands there speaking, because he is conceived so objectively that we are drawn into his interests and compelled to take part in them: for, just like the works of nature, he is developed from an inner principle by

virtue of which his words and actions appear natural, and therefore necessary. —Thus anyone who expects devils in the world to go about with horns and fools with bells will always be their prey or their plaything. Added to this is the fact that in personal dealings people behave like the moon and hunchbacks, namely, they always show only one side; indeed, everyone has an innate talent for working his physiognomy, through facial expression, into a mask that represents exactly what he really *ought* to be, and which, being calculated exclusively for his individuality, lies upon and fits him so precisely that the effect is exceedingly deceptive. He puts it on whenever it is a matter of ingratiating himself. We should put as much trust in it as if it were made of oilcloth, remembering the excellent Italian proverb: *No dog is so vicious that it does not wag its tail* (no dog is so bad that it would not wag its tail).

In any case, we should take great care not to form a very favorable opinion of any new acquaintance; otherwise, in the great majority of cases, we shall be disappointed, to our embarrassment or even our harm.—The following also deserves consideration here: it is precisely in little things, where a person is not on guard, that character reveals itself. In insignificant actions and mere manners we can often readily observe the boundless selfishness that knows not the slightest consideration for others and will later assert itself in larger matters, though in disguise. We should not miss such opportunities. If someone behaves inconsiderately in the small daily events and relations of life, in matters to which *the law does not concern itself with trifles* applies; if he seeks only his own advantage or convenience to others' detriment, appropriates what is there for everyone, and so on, we may be certain there is no justice in his heart. He will be a scoundrel in larger matters too, whenever law and force do not tie his hands; trust him no farther than the threshold. Indeed, someone who unashamedly breaks the rules of his club will also break the laws of the state as soon as he can do so without danger[Q].

[Q] If good outweighed evil in people as they generally are, it would be more advisable to rely on their justice, fairness, gratitude, loyalty, love, or compassion than on their fear. But since the reverse is true of them, the reverse is more advisable.

If someone with whom we have dealings or associate has done something unpleasant or vexatious to us, we need only ask whether he is worth so much to us that we are willing to put up with the same thing from him again, repeatedly, and even somewhat intensified—or not. (To forgive and forget is to throw costly experience out the window.) If the answer is yes, there is little to say about it, because talking helps little: we must therefore let the matter pass, with or without an admonition, but should know that in doing so we have invited its repetition. If the answer is no, we must break with our valued friend at once and forever, or dismiss him if he is a servant. For, when the occasion arises, he will inevitably do precisely the same thing, or something entirely analogous, even if he now most solemnly and sincerely assures us of the contrary. A person can forget everything, everything, except himself, his own nature. Character is absolutely incorrigible, because all human actions flow from an inward principle by virtue of which, under the same circumstances, a person must always do the same thing and cannot do otherwise. Read my prize essay on the so-called freedom of the will and free yourself from the delusion. Hence reconciliation with a friend with whom we have broken is also a weakness we pay for when, at the first opportunity, he does precisely and exactly the same thing that caused the break—indeed, with still greater boldness, secretly conscious of being indispensable. The same applies to dismissed servants whom we take back. For the same reason, we may no more expect someone to act as before under *changed* circumstances. Rather, people change their attitudes and behavior as quickly as their interests change; indeed, their calculating self-interest draws its bills at such short sight that one would have to be even more shortsighted not to let them be protested.

Suppose, then, that we wished to know how someone would act in a position into which we intend to place him: we must not rely on his promises and assurances. Even if he speaks sincerely, he is speaking of something he does not know. We must therefore calculate his conduct solely by considering the circumstances he is to enter and their conflict with his character.

To gain the clear and thorough understanding so necessary of people's true and very sad nature as they mostly are, it is exceedingly instructive to use their activities and behavior in literature as a commentary on their activities and behavior in practical life, and *conversely*. This is very useful in preventing us from losing our bearings about either ourselves or them. Yet no trait of particular baseness or stupidity encountered in life or literature should ever become a source of vexation and anger, but only of knowledge: we should see it as a new contribution to the characterization of the human race, and take note of it accordingly. We shall then regard it much as a mineralogist regards a very characteristic mineral specimen he has found.—There are exceptions, indeed incomprehensibly great ones, and differences of individuality are enormous; but taken as a whole, as has long been said, the world lies in wickedness: savages devour one another and civilized people cheat one another, and this is called the way of the world. What are states, with all their elaborate machinery directed outward and inward, and their instruments of force, but arrangements to set bounds to human beings' boundless injustice? Do we not see throughout history every king, as soon as his position is secure and his country enjoys some prosperity, use it to fall upon neighboring states with his army as with a band of robbers? Are not almost all wars, at bottom, raids for plunder? In early antiquity, and partly in the Middle Ages as well, the conquered became the victors' slaves—that is, at bottom, they had to work for them. Yet those who pay war contributions must do the same: they surrender the yield of earlier labor. *In all wars it is only a matter of stealing*, says Voltaire; and the Germans should take the lesson to heart.

- 30 No character is such that it may be left to itself and given entirely free rein: every character needs guidance through concepts and maxims. But if we wish to go far in this—to the point of developing an acquired and artificial character arising not from our inborn nature but solely from rational reflection—we shall very soon find

Though you drive nature out with a pitchfork, it will always return

confirmed. We may understand a rule for behavior toward others perfectly well, even discover and aptly express it ourselves, and yet violate it in actual life immediately afterward. But we should not let this discourage us into thinking it impossible to guide our behavior in the world by abstract rules and maxims, and therefore best simply to let ourselves go. The matter is like every theoretical precept and instruction for practice: understanding the rule is the first thing; learning to apply it is the second. Reason achieves the former at once, practice the latter gradually. We show a pupil the fingerings on an instrument, the parries and thrusts with a rapier: despite the best intentions he immediately goes wrong, and now thinks it almost impossible to observe them in the speed of reading music or the heat of combat. Yet he gradually learns through practice, stumbling, falling, and rising again. So it is with grammatical rules in writing and speaking Latin. In just the same way, the boor becomes a courtier, the hot-head a polished man of the world, the openhearted person reserved, the noble person ironic. Yet such self-training, acquired through long habit, will always act as a constraint imposed from outside, which nature never entirely ceases to resist and sometimes unexpectedly breaks through. For all action according to abstract maxims stands to action from original, inborn inclination as a human artifact—say a clock, whose form and movement are imposed on a material foreign to them—stands to a living organism, in which form and material interpenetrate and are one. This relation of acquired to inborn character thus confirms a saying of the Emperor Napoleon: *everything that is not natural is imperfect*. This is, in general, a rule applying to everything whatever, physical or moral; the sole exception I can think of is the natural aventurine known to mineralogists, which does not equal the artificial kind.

Hence a warning here against every kind of *affectation*. It always arouses contempt: first as a deception, cowardly as such because it rests on fear; second as a person's condemnation of himself by himself, since he wishes to appear what he is not, and therefore what he considers better than what he is. Affecting any quality, boasting of it, is a confession that one does not possess it. Whether someone vaunts courage, learning, intelligence, wit, success with women, wealth, high station, or anything else, we may infer that precisely there he is

somewhat deficient. For someone who truly possesses a quality perfectly does not think of parading and affecting it, but is entirely at ease about it. This is also the sense of the Spanish proverb: *a horseshoe that clatters is missing a nail* (a clattering horseshoe lacks a nail). Certainly, as said at the outset, no one may give himself unconditional free rein and show himself entirely as he is, because the much that is evil and bestial in our nature needs concealment. But this justifies only the negative, dissimulation, not the positive, simulation.—We should also know that affectation is recognized even before it becomes clear what someone is actually affecting. Finally, it does not hold out in the long run: the mask falls off one day. *No one can wear a feigned character for long. Things feigned soon fall back into their own nature.* (Seneca de Clementia, L. I, c. 1.)

- ³¹ Just as we carry the weight of our own body without feeling it as we do that of any other body we wish to move, so we notice not our own faults and vices but only those of others.—Yet in another person everyone has a mirror in which he clearly sees his own vices, faults, bad manners, and repulsive qualities of every kind. Usually, however, he behaves like the dog that barks at the mirror, not knowing it sees itself and supposing it is another dog. Whoever criticizes others works at his own improvement. Thus those inclined and accustomed to subjecting others' outward behavior, and their actions and omissions generally, to attentive and *sharp criticism* silently within themselves thereby work at their own improvement and perfection. They will possess either justice or at least enough pride and vanity to avoid themselves what they so often condemn severely. The reverse applies to the tolerant: *we grant this indulgence and ask it in return.* The Gospel moralizes very beautifully about the splinter in another's eye and the beam in one's own; but the nature of the eye makes it look outward and not at itself. Noticing and blaming our own faults in others is therefore a very suitable means of becoming aware of them. To improve ourselves, we need a mirror.

This rule also applies to style and manner of writing: whoever admires a new folly in them instead of blaming it will imitate it. Hence every such folly spreads so rapidly in Germany. The Germans are very tolerant: one can tell. *We*

grant this indulgence and ask it in return is their motto.

³² In youth, a person of nobler nature believes that the essential and decisive relations between people, and the connections arising from them, are *ideal*: those resting on similarity of disposition, ways of thinking, taste, intellectual powers, and so forth. Later, however, he discovers that they are *real*: those founded on some material interest. These underlie almost all connections; indeed, most people have no conception of any other relations. Accordingly everyone is taken according to his office, trade, nation, or family—in general, the position and role convention has assigned him—and is sorted and handled on a factory pattern accordingly. What he is in and for himself, as a human being by virtue of his personal qualities, is considered only at discretion and therefore exceptionally, and is set aside and ignored by everyone whenever convenient, hence most of the time. But the more substance he has in this respect, the less he will like that arrangement, and he will therefore try to withdraw from its reach. Yet it rests on the fact that in this world of want and need, the means of meeting these are everywhere the essential, and consequently predominant, thing.

³³ As paper money circulates instead of silver, so outward demonstrations of true respect and friendship, and gestures imitating them as naturally as possible, circulate in the world in place of the things themselves. On the other hand, one may also ask whether there are people who really deserve them. In any case, I value the wagging tail of an honest dog more than a hundred such demonstrations and gestures.

True, genuine friendship presupposes a strong, purely objective, entirely disinterested concern for another's well-being and suffering, and this in turn a real identification with one's friend. The selfishness of human nature opposes this so strongly that true friendship belongs to those things of which, as with colossal sea serpents, one does not know whether they are fabulous or exist somewhere. There are, however, various connections between people, resting chiefly, to be sure, on hidden selfish motives of the most varied kinds, yet mingled with a grain of that true and genuine friendship. This ennobles them enough that in this world of imperfections they may with some justice bear the name of

friendship. They stand far above everyday connections, which are rather of such a kind that we would not speak another word to most of our good acquaintances if we heard how they speak of us in our absence.

Apart from occasions when we need serious help and considerable sacrifices, the best opportunity to test a friend's genuineness comes when we tell him of a misfortune that has just struck us. His features then display either true, inward, unmingled sorrow, or, through their composed calm or a fleeting secondary expression, confirm *Rochefoucauld's* well-known saying: *In the adversity of our best friends, we always find something that does not displease us*. Ordinary so-called friends can often scarcely suppress the twitch of a slight, complacent smile on such occasions.—Few things so surely put people in good humor as telling them of a considerable misfortune that has recently befallen us, or frankly revealing some personal weakness to them.—Characteristic!—

Distance and long absence injure every friendship, however reluctantly we admit it. For people we do not see, even our dearest friends, gradually dry up over the years into abstract concepts, so that our concern for them becomes increasingly merely rational, indeed traditional. Lively and deeply felt concern remains reserved for those before our eyes, even if they are only beloved animals. Such is the sensory nature of humanity. Here too, then, Goethe's saying proves true:

"The present is a mighty goddess."

(Tasso, *Aufzug 4*, *Auftr. 4*.)

Friends of the house generally bear that name rightly, being more friends of the house than of its master, and thus more like cats than dogs.

Friends call themselves sincere; enemies are so. We should therefore use their criticism for self-knowledge, like a bitter medicine.—

Friends in need are rare?—On the contrary! Scarcely have we made friends with someone before he is already in need and wants to borrow money.—

- 34 What a novice someone is who imagines that displaying intelligence and understanding is a means of making himself popular in society! Rather, in the overwhelmingly vast majority they arouse hatred and resentment, all the more bit-

ter because the person feeling it has no right to complain of its cause, and even conceals it from himself. The process is this: if someone notices and feels great intellectual superiority in the person he is talking to, he silently and without clear awareness concludes that the other notices and feels his inferiority and limitations to the same degree. This unspoken inference arouses his bitterest hatred, resentment, and rage. (Vergl. *Welt als Wille und Vorstell.*, 3. Aufl., Bd. II, 256, the quoted words of Dr. *Johnson* and *Merck*, Goethe's youthful friend.) *Gracián* therefore rightly says: "*To be well liked, the only means is to clothe oneself in the skin of the simplest of beasts.*" (S. *Oraculo manual, y arte de prudencia*, 240. [Obras, Amberes 1702, P. II, p. 287.]) Displaying intelligence and understanding is, after all, merely an indirect way of reproaching everyone else for their incapacity and stupidity. Moreover, a vulgar nature rises in revolt at the sight of its opposite, and envy is the revolt's secret instigator. For satisfying vanity, as we see daily, is a pleasure people prize above all others, yet it is possible only by comparing themselves with others. Of no advantages, however, are human beings so proud as intellectual ones: on these alone rests their superiority to animals[R]. To confront someone with decided superiority in this respect, and before witnesses into the bargain, is therefore the greatest audacity. He feels challenged to revenge and will generally seek an opportunity to take it through insult, thereby passing from the domain of intelligence to that of the will, where in this respect we are all equal. Thus, while station and wealth may always count on high esteem in society, intellectual advantages can expect nothing of the kind. At best they are ignored; otherwise they are regarded as a sort of impertinence, or as something their possessor has acquired illicitly and now presumes to parade. Everyone therefore secretly intends to inflict some other humiliation on him in return, merely waiting for the opportunity. Even the humblest behavior will scarcely succeed in begging pardon for intellectual superiority. Sadi says in the *Gulistan* (S. 146 der Übersetzung von Graf): "Know that the unintelligent feel a hundred times more aversion toward the intelligent than the intelligent feel toward the unintelligent."—Intellectual *inferiority*, by contrast, is a real recommendation. The comforting feeling of superiority is to the mind what warmth is to the body: everyone therefore approaches whatever

promises it as instinctively as a stove or sunshine. Only someone decidedly lower can offer this: lower in intellectual qualities among men, in beauty among women. Admittedly, it takes some doing to demonstrate unfeigned inferiority before certain people. By contrast, observe the heartfelt friendliness with which a tolerably attractive girl meets a thoroughly ugly one. Physical advantages count for little among men, though one does feel more comfortable beside a smaller man than a larger one. Accordingly, stupid and ignorant men and ugly women are universally liked and sought after: they easily acquire a reputation for having an exceedingly good heart, since everyone needs a pretext for affection, before himself and others. Precisely for this reason, intellectual superiority of every kind is a very isolating quality: it is shunned and hated, and all manner of faults are invented in its possessor as a pretext[S]. Beauty has just the same effect among women: very beautiful girls find no female friend, indeed no companion. They would do better not even to apply for positions as companions, for at their very entrance the face of the hoped-for new mistress darkens: neither for herself nor for her daughters does she need such a foil.—Advantages of rank work in the opposite way, however, since unlike personal advantages they act not through contrast and distance but through reflection, as surrounding colors act on a face.

[R] We may say that a human being has given himself his *will*, for that *is* himself; but the *intellect* is an endowment received from heaven—that is, from eternal, mysterious fate and its necessity, of which his mother was merely the instrument.

[S] Friendships and comradeships are by far the chief means of *getting ahead in the world*. But *great abilities* always make people proud, and thus ill suited to flattering those who possess only slight abilities, before whom they are even expected to conceal and deny their great ones. Consciousness of possessing only slight abilities has the opposite effect: it goes excellently with humility, affability, obligingness, and respect for what is inferior, and thus gains friends and patrons.

What has been said applies not merely to state service, but also to honorary posts, dignities, indeed fame in the learned world: in academies, for example, dear mediocrity is always on top, people of merit get in late or never, and so with everything.

- ³⁵ Laziness, selfishness, and vanity very often account for the greatest part of our trust in others: laziness when we prefer to trust someone else rather than investigate, watch, or act ourselves; selfishness when the need to talk about our affairs tempts us to confide something to him; vanity when it belongs to the things on which we pride ourselves. Nevertheless, we demand that our confidence be honored.

We should not, however, become angry at distrust, for it contains a compliment to honesty: the sincere admission of its great rarity, which places it among the things whose existence is doubted.

- ³⁶ I gave *one* basis of *politeness*, that Chinese cardinal virtue, in my *Ethics*, S. 201 (2. Aufl. 198); the other lies in the following. It is a tacit agreement mutually to ignore one another's wretched moral and intellectual condition and not reproach each other with it, whereby, to mutual advantage, it comes to light somewhat less readily.

Politeness is prudence; consequently impoliteness is stupidity. To make enemies needlessly and wantonly through it is madness, like setting one's house on fire. For politeness, like reckoning tokens, is an openly false coin: to be sparing with it shows a lack of understanding, while generosity with it shows understanding. All nations close their letters with *your very humble servant, your most obedient servant, your most devoted servant*; only the Germans hold back from "servant"—because it is not true, after all! But someone who carries politeness to the point of sacrificing real interests resembles a person who gives genuine gold pieces instead of reckoning tokens.—Just as wax, naturally hard and brittle, becomes so pliable with a little warmth that it assumes any desired shape, so even stubborn and hostile people can be made flexible and obliging through a little politeness and friendliness. Politeness is therefore to human beings what warmth is to wax.

Politeness is admittedly a difficult task insofar as it requires us to show the greatest respect to everyone, while the great majority deserve none; and to simulate the liveliest interest in them, while we must be glad to have no interest in them at all.—To unite politeness with pride is a masterpiece.—

Insults, which really always consist in expressions of disrespect, would discompose us far less if, on the one hand, we did not cherish an utterly exaggerated conception of our high worth and dignity, and thus immeasurable arrogance, and if, on the other, we had made clear to ourselves what each person generally thinks of another in his heart. What a glaring contrast there is between most people's sensitivity to the faintest hint of criticism directed at them and what they would hear if they eavesdropped on their acquaintances' conversations about them! We should rather keep in mind that ordinary politeness is merely a grinning mask: then we would not cry out if it shifted a little or were removed for a moment. But when someone becomes downright rude, it is as though he had thrown off his clothes and stood there *in a state of nature*. To be sure, like most people in that condition, he cuts a poor figure.

³⁷ We must take no other person as a model for our actions and omissions, because position, circumstances, and relations are never the same, and because differences of character also give actions a different coloring; hence *when two do the same thing, it is not the same thing*. After mature consideration and searching reflection, we must act in accordance with our own character. Thus *originality* is indispensable in *practice* too; otherwise what we do does not fit what we are.

³⁸ Do not dispute anyone's opinion, but consider that if you wished to talk him out of every absurdity he believes, you could reach Methuselah's age without finishing.

In conversation we should also refrain from all corrective remarks, however well intended: for it is easy to hurt people, difficult if not impossible to improve them.

If the absurdities of a conversation we are obliged to hear begin to vex us, we must imagine it is a scene in a comedy between two fools. *Tried and tested*.—Whoever has come into the world seriously to *instruct* it in the most important matters may count himself lucky if he escapes with his skin whole.

- 39 Whoever wants his judgment to be believed should state it coolly and without passion. All vehemence springs from the will; the judgment will therefore be attributed to *this*, not to knowledge, which is cold by nature. Since the will is the fundamental element in human beings, while knowledge is merely secondary and added later, people will sooner believe the judgment arose from an excited will than that the excitement of the will arose merely from the judgment.
- 40 Even with the best right to do so, do not be tempted into self-praise. Vanity is so common and merit so uncommon that whenever we seem to praise ourselves, even indirectly, everyone will wager a hundred to one that it is vanity speaking through us, lacking the understanding to perceive the ridiculousness of the matter.—Yet for all this, Bacon of Verulam may not be entirely wrong in saying that *something always sticks* applies to self-praise as well as slander, and therefore recommending it in moderate doses.
- 41 If you suspect someone is lying, pretend to believe him: he will grow bold, lie more extravagantly, and be unmasked. If, on the other hand, you notice that part of a truth he wishes to conceal has slipped out, pretend to disbelieve it, so that, provoked by contradiction, he sends up the rear guard of the whole truth.
- 42 We should regard all our personal affairs as secrets, and to our good acquaintances we must remain complete strangers beyond what they see with their own eyes. For their knowledge of the most innocent things may, through time and circumstances, bring us harm.—In general it is more advisable to display understanding by what we leave unsaid than by what we say. The former is a matter of prudence, the latter of vanity. The opportunity for both occurs equally often, but we frequently prefer the fleeting satisfaction offered by the latter to the lasting benefit brought by the former. We should even deny ourselves the

relief of once speaking a word aloud to ourselves, as lively people sometimes do, lest it become a habit: thought and word thereby become so intimate and brotherly that speaking with others gradually passes into thinking aloud; whereas prudence commands that a wide gulf be kept open between our thinking and our speaking.

Sometimes we think others cannot possibly believe something concerning us, while it never occurs to them to doubt it. But if we cause the thought to occur to them, they can no longer believe it either. Yet we often betray ourselves merely because we imagine it impossible that people do not notice—just as we plunge from a height through vertigo, that is, through the thought that it is impossible to stand firm here, while the torment of standing here is so great that it is better to cut it short. This delusion is called vertigo.

On the other hand, we should know that people, even those who otherwise show no particular acuteness, are excellent algebraists in the personal affairs of others, where from a single given quantity they solve the most intricate problems. If, for example, we tell them of a former occurrence while omitting all names and other identifying features of the people concerned, we must take care not to introduce any entirely definite and individual circumstance, however slight: a place, a point in time, the name of a minor participant, or anything else even directly connected with it. They then instantly have a definite given quantity, from which their algebraic acuteness works out everything else. Curiosity's enthusiasm is so great here that through it the will drives its spurs into the intellect's sides, urging it on to the remotest conclusions. For as unresponsive and indifferent as people are to *general* truths, they are just as eager for individual ones.

Accordingly, every teacher of worldly wisdom has recommended silence most urgently and with the most varied arguments; I can therefore leave the matter at what has been said. I will add only a few Arabic maxims, particularly striking and little known. "What your enemy should not know, do not tell your friend."—"If I keep my secret silent, it is my prisoner; if I let it slip, I am its prisoner."—"On the tree of silence hangs its fruit: peace."

- ⁴³ No money is more profitably spent than that out of which we have been cheated: we have acquired prudence directly in exchange.
- ⁴⁴ If possible, we should harbor animosity toward no one, but carefully note and remember everyone's *ways of proceeding*, to establish his worth, at least in relation to ourselves, and regulate our conduct and behavior toward him accordingly—always convinced of character's immutability. Ever to forget a bad trait in a person is like throwing away hard-earned money.—In this way we protect ourselves against foolish familiarity and foolish friendship.—
“Neither love nor hate” contains half of all worldly wisdom; “say nothing and believe nothing” contains the other half. Yet we shall gladly turn our backs on a world that makes rules like these and those that follow necessary.
- ⁴⁵ To show anger or hatred in words or features is useless, dangerous, imprudent, ridiculous, and vulgar. We must therefore never show anger or hatred except in deeds. We shall be able to do the latter more perfectly the more perfectly we have avoided the former.—Only cold-blooded animals are venomous.
- ⁴⁶ *Speak without emphasis*: this old rule of worldly people aims to leave it to others' understanding to discover what one has said. That understanding is slow, and before it has finished, one is gone. *Speaking with emphasis*, by contrast, means addressing feeling, where everything turns out the other way. With a polite gesture and friendly tone, one can even say downright insults to some people without immediate danger.

D. Our Conduct toward the Course of the World and Fate.

- ⁴⁷ Whatever form human life takes, its elements are always the same; essentially it is therefore the same everywhere, whether lived in a hut or at court, in a monastery or in the army. However varied its events, adventures, good fortune and misfortune may be, it is like confectionery: there are many kinds of intricate and colorful figures, but all are kneaded from one dough. What happens to one person is far more like what befell another than the latter thinks while lis-

tening to the account. The events of our lives also resemble the pictures in a kaleidoscope: at every turn we see something different, yet really always have the same thing before our eyes.

- 48 There are three world powers, an ancient very aptly says: understanding, strength, and fortune—prudence, strength, and luck. I believe the last has the greatest power. For our path through life may be compared to the course of a ship. Fate, chance, *favorable or adverse fortune*, plays the part of the wind, swiftly carrying us far forward or throwing us far back; against it our own effort and striving can do little. These play the part of the oars: after many hours' labor has brought us some distance forward, a sudden gust throws us just as far back. If favorable, however, it advances us so greatly that we have no need of the oars. A Spanish proverb expresses this power of fortune unsurpassably: *give your son luck and throw him into the sea* (give your son good fortune and throw him into the sea).

Chance is certainly an evil power, to which we should entrust as little as possible. Yet among all givers, who is the only one who, in giving, simultaneously shows us most plainly that we have no claim at all to his gifts; that we owe them not to our worthiness but solely to his goodness and grace; and that from precisely this we may draw the joyful hope of humbly receiving many more unmerited gifts?—It is chance: chance, who understands the royal art of making it clear that beside his favor and grace all merit is powerless and counts for nothing.—

When we look back on our path through life, survey its “labyrinthine wandering course,” and must now see so much happiness missed and so much misfortune brought upon ourselves, we can easily go too far in self-reproach. For our life's course is by no means entirely our own work, but the product of two factors: the sequence of events and the sequence of our decisions, which constantly interlock and modify one another. Moreover, in both our horizon is always very limited: we cannot predict our decisions from far off, still less foresee events; of either, only the present ones are really well known to us. As long as our goal is still distant, therefore, we cannot even steer straight toward it, but

only direct our course approximately and by conjecture, often having to tack. All we can do is make our decisions according to the circumstances of the moment, hoping to choose in a way that brings us nearer our main goal. Thus events and our fundamental intentions are generally comparable to two forces pulling in different directions; the diagonal resulting from them is our life's course.—*Terence* said: *Human life is like playing dice: if the throw you most need does not fall, correct by skill what has fallen by chance*; he must have had some kind of backgammon in mind. More briefly we may say: fate shuffles the cards and we play. But the following comparison would express my present reflection most aptly. Life is like chess: we devise a plan, but it remains conditional on what our opponent in chess, and fate in life, may please to do. The resulting alterations to our plan are usually so great that in its execution it can scarcely be recognized in more than a few fundamental features.

Yet in our life's course there is something beyond all this. That we are often more foolish than we believe is a commonplace truth confirmed all too frequently; that we are often wiser than we ourselves suppose, by contrast, is a discovery made only by those who have experienced it, and even then only late. There is something within us wiser than our heads. For in the great outlines and principal steps of our life's course, we act less from clear knowledge of what is right than from an inward impulse—one might say instinct—arising from the deepest ground of our being. Afterward we criticize our actions according to clear but also meager, acquired, indeed borrowed concepts, general rules, others' examples, and so forth, without sufficiently considering that "one thing does not suit everyone." We then easily become unjust to ourselves. But in the end it becomes apparent who was right, and only an old age happily attained is capable, subjectively and objectively, of judging the matter.

Perhaps that inward impulse is under the guidance, unknown to us, of prophetic dreams forgotten on waking, which thereby give our life the consistency of tone and dramatic unity that our so often wavering, erring, and easily swayed cerebral consciousness could not provide. Through it, for example, someone called to great achievements of a particular kind feels this inwardly and secretly from youth and works toward it as bees work at building their hive.

For everyone, however, it is what *Baltasar Gracián* calls *the great faculty of sound judgment*: the great instinctive guardianship of oneself, without which one perishes.—Acting according to *abstract principles* is difficult, succeeds only after much practice, and even then not every time; moreover, such principles are often insufficient. Yet everyone has certain *inborn concrete principles* in his blood and substance, the result of all his thinking, feeling, and willing. He generally does not know them *in the abstract*, but only on looking back over his life discovers that he has always followed them and been drawn by them as by an invisible thread. According to their nature they will lead him to happiness or unhappiness.

- ⁴⁹ We should constantly keep before our eyes the effect of time and the changeability of things, and therefore immediately imagine the opposite of whatever is happening now: vividly picture misfortune in good fortune, enmity in friendship, bad weather in fine weather, hatred in love, betrayal and regret in confidence and openness—and conversely as well. This would provide a lasting source of true worldly wisdom, keeping us always reflective and less easily deceived. Usually we would thereby merely have anticipated time's effect.—But perhaps for no knowledge is experience so indispensable as for a correct estimate of the instability and change of things. Since every state necessarily exists for the time it lasts, and therefore with the fullest right, every year, month, and day looks as though it now intended at last to remain in the right for all eternity. Yet none does, and change alone is constant. The prudent person is the one whom apparent stability does not deceive and who also foresees the direction change will next take[T]. People, by contrast, generally take the temporary state of things, or the direction of their course, as permanent because they have the effects before their eyes but do not understand the causes. Yet it is the causes that carry the seed of future changes within them, while the effect, which alone exists for those people, contains nothing of this. They hold to the effect, assuming that the unknown causes capable of producing it will also be able to preserve it. They have the advantage that when they err, it is always *in unison*, so the calamity that consequently befalls them is always general, whereas a think-

ing mind, if mistaken, stands alone into the bargain.—Incidentally, this confirms my proposition that error always arises from reasoning backward from consequence to ground. See “Welt als W. u. V.” Bd. 1, S. 90. (3. Aufl. 94.)

[T] *Chance* has so much scope in all human affairs that if we immediately try to forestall a danger threatening from afar by making sacrifices, that danger often disappears through some unforeseen turn of events. Not only are the sacrifices then lost, but the change they have brought about is now, under altered circumstances, precisely a disadvantage. We must therefore not extend our precautions too far into the future, but also reckon with chance and boldly face some dangers, hoping they will pass like so many black thunderclouds.

We should, however, *anticipate time* only theoretically, by foreseeing its effects, not practically: not forestall it by demanding *before* its time what only time can bring. Whoever does so will discover that there is no worse or more relentless usurer than time itself, and that when forced to make advances it charges heavier interest than any Jew. For example, quicklime and heat can force a tree to put out leaves, blossoms, and fruit within a few days, but afterward it dies.—If a youth wants already to exercise the reproductive power of a man, even for only a few weeks, and achieve at nineteen what he could very well do at thirty, time may grant the advance, but part of the strength of his future years, indeed part of his life itself, is the interest.—There are illnesses from which one recovers properly and thoroughly only by allowing them their natural course, after which they disappear of themselves without leaving a trace. But if one demands to be healthy immediately and now, just now, here too time must make an advance: the illness is driven out, but the interest is weakness and chronic ailments for life.—If in times of war or unrest one needs money immediately, just now, one is compelled to sell land or government securities for 1/3 or even less of their value, which one could receive in full by allowing time its rights and waiting a few years; but one forces it to make an advance.—Or one needs a sum for a long journey: within one or two years it could have been saved from income. But one will not wait, so it is borrowed or temporarily taken from capital; that is, time must advance it. Its interest is then disorder in the finances, a permanent and growing deficit one never gets rid of.—Such, then, is time’s

usury: all who cannot wait become its victims. Trying to accelerate the measured course of time is the most costly undertaking. Beware, therefore, of owing time interest.

- 50 A characteristic difference between ordinary and intelligent minds, often evident in everyday life, is that in considering and estimating possible dangers the former always ask and consider only what of the kind has already *happened*; the latter consider for themselves what *could possibly happen*. They remember that, as a Spanish proverb says, *what does not happen in a year happens in a moment* (what does not happen within a year happens within a few minutes). The difference is certainly natural: surveying what *can* happen requires understanding; what *has* happened, merely the senses.

Let our maxim be: sacrifice to the evil demons! That is, we should not shrink from a certain expenditure of effort, time, inconvenience, elaborate precautions, money, or privation to close the door to the possibility of a misfortune; the greater the misfortune would be, the smaller, remoter, and more improbable its possibility may be. The clearest example of this rule is the insurance premium: a sacrifice publicly offered by everyone on the altar of the evil demons.

- 51 We should not break into great rejoicing or great lamentation over any event, partly because of the changeability of all things, which may transform it at any moment, and partly because our judgment of what benefits or harms us is deceptive. Hence almost everyone has at some time lamented what later proved his true greatest good, or rejoiced over what became the source of his greatest sufferings. Shakespeare beautifully expressed the disposition recommended here against this:

I have felt so many quirks of joy and grief,
That the first face of neither, on the start,
Can woman me unto it.[U]

(All's well, A. 3. sc. 2.)

[U] I have already felt so many assaults of joy and sorrow that I no longer let the first sight of the occasion for either immediately sweep me away in womanly fashion.

In general, someone who remains composed through every misfortune shows that he knows how colossal and thousandfold are the possible evils of life, and therefore regards what has now occurred as a very small part of what might come. This is the Stoic disposition, according to which we should never be *forgetful of the human condition*, but always remember what a sad and pitiable lot human existence is in general, and how innumerable the evils to which it is exposed. To renew this insight, we need only look around anywhere: wherever we may be, we shall soon have before our eyes this struggling, writhing, and torment over wretched, bare, unprofitable existence. We shall then moderate our demands, learn to accommodate ourselves to the imperfection of all things and conditions, and always look out for misfortunes, to avoid or endure them. For misfortunes great and small are the very element of our lives; we should always keep this in mind, without, however, becoming a gloomy person and lamenting with *Beresford* over the hourly *miseries of human life* and pulling faces, still less *invoking God at a flea bite*. Rather, as a cautious person, we should carry care in anticipating and preventing misfortunes—whether arising from people or things—so far and refine it so well that, like a clever fox, we neatly avoid every great or small mishap, which is usually only clumsiness in disguise.

That a misfortune is easier to bear when we have considered it possible beforehand and, as people say, braced ourselves for it, may arise chiefly from this: when we calmly consider the event before it occurs, as a mere possibility, we clearly survey the extent of the misfortune on every side and thus recognize it at least as finite and comprehensible. Consequently, when it actually strikes, it can exert no more than its true weight. If, by contrast, we have not done this but are struck unprepared, the frightened mind cannot accurately measure the magnitude of the misfortune in the first moment: it is now beyond its survey and therefore readily appears immeasurable, or at least much greater than it really is. In the same way, darkness and uncertainty make every danger appear greater. Admittedly, we have also considered consolations and remedies for the misfortune anticipated as possible, or at least become accustomed to the idea of it.

Nothing will better equip us to bear the misfortunes that strike us calmly, however, than conviction of the truth I derived from its ultimate grounds and established in my prize essay *On the Freedom of the Will*; as it says there, S. 62 (2. Aufl. S. 60): “Everything that happens, from the greatest to the smallest, happens *necessarily*.” For human beings soon know how to reconcile themselves to what is unavoidably necessary, and this knowledge lets them regard everything, even what is brought about by the strangest accidents, as just as necessary as what occurs according to the most familiar rules and with complete foresight. I refer here to what I said (*Welt als W. u. V. Bd. 1, S. 345 u. 46 [3. Aufl. 361]*) about the calming effect of knowing the unavoidable and necessary. Whoever is permeated by this conviction will first do what he can, then willingly suffer what he must.

The little mishaps that vex us hourly may be regarded as intended to keep us in practice, so that amid good fortune our strength to bear great ones does not grow entirely slack. Against daily harassment, petty friction in human dealings, insignificant provocations, others’ improprieties, gossip, and the like, we must be a horn-skinned Siegfried: not feel them at all, much less take them to heart and brood over them. Instead, let none of it approach us; kick it aside like little stones lying in the path, and by no means admit it into our inward reflection and rumination.

- ⁵² What people commonly call fate, however, is usually only their own foolish behavior. We therefore cannot take too much to heart the beautiful passage in Homer (*JL. XXIII, 313 sqq.*) where he recommends intelligent deliberation, that is, prudent reflection. For even if our worst deeds are punished only in the next world, our foolish ones are punished already in this one—though now and then mercy may take the place of justice.

It is not someone who looks fierce, but someone who looks clever, who appears terrible and dangerous—as surely as the human brain is a more terrible weapon than the lion’s claw.—

The most accomplished man of the world would be the one who never stalled in indecision and never fell into haste.

53 Next to prudence, courage is a quality very essential to our happiness. Certainly we can give ourselves neither: we inherit the former from our mother, the latter from our father. Yet resolve and practice can assist what we already have. This world, where “the dice fall iron-hard,” requires an iron spirit, armored against fate and armed against human beings. For the whole of life is a struggle, every step is contested, and Voltaire rightly says: *In this world one succeeds only at sword point, and dies with weapons in hand.* A cowardly soul therefore shrinks, loses heart, and wails as soon as clouds gather, or even merely appear on the horizon. Let our motto rather be:

Do not yield to evils, but advance more boldly against them.

As long as the outcome of a dangerous affair remains merely doubtful, as long as there is still a possibility of a happy result, there must be no thought of losing courage, only of resistance; just as we must not despair of the weather as long as a patch of blue remains in the sky. Indeed, let us reach the point of saying:

If the shattered world should fall upon him,

Its ruins would strike him unafraid.

The whole of life itself, much less its goods, is not worth such cowardly trembling and shrinking of the heart:

Therefore live bravely,

And set brave hearts against adversity.

Yet excess is possible even here, for courage can degenerate into rashness. Indeed, a certain measure of fearfulness is necessary to maintaining ourselves in the world; cowardice is merely exceeding it. Bacon of Verulam expressed this very aptly in his etymological explanation of *panic terror*, which leaves far behind the older one preserved by Plutarch (de Iside et Osir. c. 14). He derives it from *Pan*, as personified nature, and says: *For the nature of things has implanted in all living beings fear and dread, which preserve their life and existence and avoid and repel approaching evils. Yet this same nature does not know how to keep within bounds, but always mingles vain and empty fears with salutary ones, so that all things, could they be seen within, are utterly full of panic terrors, especially human things.* (De sapientia veterum VI.) The characteristic fea-

ture of panic terror, moreover, is that it is not clearly conscious of its grounds, but assumes them rather than knows them; indeed, if necessary, it simply treats fear itself as a ground for fear.

Chapter 6



On the Differences between the Ages of Life.

Voltaire said most beautifully:

Whoever lacks the spirit of his age

Has all the misfortune of his age.

It will therefore be fitting, at the close of these reflections on happiness, to glance at the changes the ages of life bring about in us.

Throughout our whole life we possess only the *present*, and never anything more. Its sole differences are that at the beginning we see a long future before us, toward the end a long past behind us; and that our temperament, though not our character, passes through certain familiar changes, each giving the present a different coloring.—

In my principal work, Bd. 2, Kap. 31, S. 394 ff. (3. Aufl. 499 ff.), I explained that and why in *childhood* we are far more *knowing* than *willing*. On precisely this rests the happiness of the first quarter of life, which afterward lies behind us like a lost paradise. In childhood we have few relations and small needs, and thus little stimulation of the will: the greater part of our being is therefore absorbed in *knowing*.—The intellect, like the brain, which reaches its full size already in the seventh year, develops early, though it is not mature, and continually seeks nourishment in a whole world of still-new existence, where everything, everything is varnished with the charm of novelty. Hence our childhood years are a continual poetry. For the essence of poetry, like that of all art, con-

sists in apprehending the Platonic Idea in each individual thing: what is essential, and thus common to the whole *kind*. Each thing thereby appears as representative of its species, and *one* case stands for a thousand. Although it seems that in the scenes of childhood we are always occupied only with the particular individual object or event, and only insofar as it interests our momentary willing, the matter is different at bottom. Life in all its significance still stands before us so new and fresh, its impressions not dulled by repetition, that amid our childish activities we are always silently and without distinct intention occupied in apprehending, through individual scenes and events, the essence of life itself, the fundamental types of its forms and representations. As Spinoza puts it, we see all things and people *under the aspect of eternity*. The younger we are, the more each individual thing represents its whole species. This diminishes increasingly from year to year, and on it rests the great difference between the impressions things make upon us in youth and old age. Hence the experiences and acquaintances of childhood and early youth later become the fixed types and headings of all subsequent knowledge and experience, their categories, so to speak, under which we subsume everything later, though not always with clear awareness. Thus the firm foundation of our view of the world, and therefore its shallowness or depth, is formed already in childhood; it is later elaborated and completed, but not essentially changed. Consequently, through this purely objective and therefore poetic outlook essential to childhood, reinforced by the will's still being far from its full energy, as children we are much more purely knowing than willing. Hence the serious, contemplative gaze of some children, which Raphael used so felicitously for his angels, especially those of the Sistine Madonna. For this very reason childhood years are so blissful that their memory is always accompanied by longing.—While we apply ourselves with such seriousness to our first *perceptual* understanding of things, education, on the other hand, endeavors to teach us *concepts*. But concepts do not provide what is truly essential: this, the foundation and genuine content of all our knowledge, lies rather in the *perceptual* apprehension of the world. We can gain this only ourselves; it cannot in any way be *taught* to us. Hence our intellectual worth, like our moral worth, does not enter us from outside but

arises from the depths of our own being; no Pestalozzian educational arts can turn a born fool into a thinking person: never! He is born a fool and must die a fool.—The deeply inward apprehension of the first world of outward perception described here also explains why childhood surroundings and experiences impress themselves so firmly on memory. We were given over to them undividedly, nothing distracted us, and we looked at the things before us as though they were the only ones of their kind, indeed the only things in existence at all. Later, the multitude of objects then known to us robs us of courage and patience.—If we now recall what I demonstrated at S. 372 ff. (3. Aufl. 423 ff.) of the aforementioned volume of my principal work—that the *objective* existence of all things, their existence in mere *representation*, is thoroughly delightful, whereas their *subjective* existence, consisting in *willing*, is heavily mixed with pain and sorrow—we may accept as a brief expression of the matter the proposition: all things are splendid to *see*, but terrible to *be*. According to the foregoing, in childhood things are known to us far more from the side of *seeing*, of representation and objectivity, than from the side of *being*, which is the side of will. Since the former is the delightful side of things, while their subjective and terrible side remains unknown to us, the young intellect takes all the forms reality and art present to it for so many blissful beings. It imagines that as beautiful as they are to see, it would be just as beautiful, and much more so, to *be* them. The world accordingly lies before it like an Eden: this is the Arcadia in which we are all born. Somewhat later, this gives rise to the thirst for actual life, the impulse toward deeds and sufferings that drives us into the world's turmoil. There we learn the other side of things, that of being, of willing, which is thwarted at every step. Gradually the great disillusionment approaches, after whose arrival one says, *the age of illusions has passed*; yet it still continues and grows ever more complete. We may therefore say that in childhood life presents itself like a theater set seen from far away; in old age, like the same set seen at the closest quarters.

Finally, the following also contributes to childhood's happiness. Just as at the beginning of spring all foliage has the same color and almost the same shape, so in early childhood we too all resemble one another and therefore harmonize

excellently. With puberty, however, divergence begins and, like the radii of a circle, grows ever greater.

What darkens, indeed makes unhappy, the rest of the first half of life—which has so many advantages over the second—namely youth, is the pursuit of happiness in the firm assumption that it must be found in life. From this arises continually disappointed hope, and from that discontent. Shimmering images of a dreamed, indefinite happiness hover before us in capriciously chosen forms, and we seek their original in vain. Hence in our youthful years we are usually dissatisfied with our situation and surroundings, whatever they may be, because we attribute to them what belongs everywhere to the emptiness and poverty of human life, with which we are now making our first acquaintance after expecting entirely different things.—Much would be gained if early instruction could eradicate in the young the delusion that there is much to be had in the world. But the reverse occurs, because we usually come to know life through literature before reality. The scenes it depicts shine before our gaze in the dawn of our own youth, and now we are tormented by the longing to see them realized—to grasp the rainbow. A young person expects his life's course in the form of an interesting novel. Thus arises the deception I have already described at S. 347 (3. Aufl. 428) of the aforementioned second volume. For what gives all those images their charm is precisely that they are mere images and not real, so that while contemplating them we are in the peace and complete self-sufficiency of pure knowing. To become real means to be filled with willing, which brings unavoidable pain. The interested reader is also referred here to the passage at S. 427 (3. Aufl. 488) of that volume.

If the character of the first half of life is thus unsatisfied longing for happiness, that of the second is fear of misfortune. For with it comes the more or less clear knowledge that all happiness is chimerical, while suffering is real. Hence now, at least by more rational characters, mere freedom from pain and an undisturbed condition are sought rather than enjoyment[V].—In my youthful years, when my doorbell rang, I grew pleased, thinking: now it is coming. In later years, however, my feeling on the same occasion was much closer to fear: I thought, “Here it comes.”—Regarding the human world, distinguished and

gifted individuals, who precisely as such do not quite belong to it and therefore stand more or less alone according to the degree of their advantages, likewise have two opposed feelings. In youth they often feel *abandoned* by it; in later years, that they have *escaped* it. The first, unpleasant feeling rests on not knowing it, the second, pleasant one on knowing it.—Consequently the second half of life, like the second half of a musical period, contains less striving but more repose than the first. In general this rests on our thinking in youth that the world offers wondrous happiness and enjoyment, only difficult to reach; while in old age we know there is nothing to be gained there, and thus, entirely at ease on that score, enjoy a tolerable present and even take pleasure in little things.—[V] In old age we know better how to prevent misfortunes; in youth, how to bear them.

What a mature man has gained through his life's experience, making him see the world differently from a youth or boy, is first of all *freedom from preconception*. Only he sees things quite simply and takes them for what they are, while for the boy and youth an illusory image composed of self-created fancies, inherited prejudices, and strange imaginings covered or distorted the actual world. For the first task experience finds before it is to free us from the fantasies and false concepts that took hold in youth. Preserving youth from these would certainly be the best education, though merely a negative one, but is very difficult. For this purpose we would have to keep the child's horizon as narrow as possible, while teaching only clear and correct concepts within it; only after the child had rightly understood everything within it should we gradually widen it, always ensuring that nothing obscure, half-understood, or misunderstood remained behind. The child's concepts of things and human relations would thus still be limited and very simple, but clear and correct, always needing only expansion, not correction; and so on into youth. This method especially requires that novels not be permitted, but replaced by suitable biographies, such as *Franklin's*, Moritz's *Anton Reiser*, and the like.—

When young, we imagine that the events and people important and consequential in our life's course will enter with drums and trumpets; in old age, however, looking back shows that they all slipped in quite quietly through the back door,

almost unnoticed.

In the respect considered so far, life may also be compared to an embroidered fabric, of which everyone sees the right side in the first half of life and the reverse in the second. The latter is not so beautiful, but more instructive, since it reveals how the threads connect.—

Intellectual superiority, even the greatest, will assert its decided preponderance in conversation only after the fortieth year. For maturity of years and the fruit of experience may be surpassed by it in many ways, but never replaced; they give even the most ordinary person a certain counterweight to the powers of the greatest mind as long as that mind is young. I mean here only the personal sphere, not the works.—

Any person of some excellence, anyone who does not belong to the 5/6 of humanity so sadly endowed by nature, will scarcely remain free after forty from a certain touch of misanthropy. Naturally, he had inferred others' nature from his own, and has gradually been disillusioned, discovering that in head or heart, usually both, they remain in his debt and never settle accounts. He therefore gladly avoids dealings with them; in general, everyone will love or hate solitude—that is, his own company—according to his inward worth. *Kant* also discusses this kind of misanthropy in the *Krit. der Urteilkraft*, toward the end of the general observation on § 29 of the first part.

In a *young person* it is a bad sign, intellectually and morally, to know very early how to *find his way* among human activities, to feel immediately at home in them and enter them as though prepared: it announces vulgarity. In this respect, by contrast, an estranged, startled, awkward, and mistaken manner points to a nobler nature.

The cheerfulness and courage for life of our youth rest partly on our not seeing death as we climb uphill, because it lies at the foot of the mountain's other side. But once we have crossed the summit, we actually catch sight of death, until then known only by hearsay; and since at the same time vital power begins to ebb, courage for life also sinks. A gloomy seriousness now displaces youthful exuberance and impresses itself even on the face. As long as we are young, whatever people may tell us, we regard life as endless and treat time accordingly. The

older we grow, the more economically we use our time. For in later age every day lived out arouses a feeling akin to that felt at every step by a condemned man being led to execution.

Viewed from youth's standpoint, life is an infinitely long future; from old age's, a very short past. At first it therefore appears to us as things do when we put the objective lens of opera glasses to our eye; at last, as when we use the eyepiece. One must have grown old, and thus lived long, to recognize how short life is.—The older we become, the smaller human affairs appear, one and all. Life, which stood firm and stable before us in youth, now reveals itself as the rapid flight of ephemeral appearances: the nothingness of the whole emerges.—Time itself moves far more slowly in our youth; hence the first quarter of life is not only the happiest but also the longest, leaving far more memories, so that if called upon everyone could relate more from it than from two of the following quarters. Indeed, as in the spring of the year, so in the spring of life, the days finally grow burdensomely long. In the autumn of both they become short, but brighter and more settled.

Why, then, in old age does the life behind us seem so short? Because we take it to be as short as our memory of it. Everything insignificant and much that is unpleasant has fallen out of that memory, leaving little behind. For just as our intellect in general is very imperfect, so is memory: what has been learned must be practiced, the past pondered, if both are not gradually to sink into the abyss of oblivion. Yet we do not usually ponder the insignificant, nor generally the unpleasant, as would be necessary to preserve them in memory. And the insignificant grows ever more plentiful: through frequent and finally countless repetitions, many things that at first seemed significant gradually become insignificant. We therefore remember earlier years better than later ones. The longer we live, the fewer events seem important or significant enough to ponder afterward, which alone could fix them in memory; they are therefore forgotten as soon as they are past. Thus time runs its course leaving ever fewer traces.—Further, we do not like to ponder the unpleasant, least of all when it wounds our vanity, which is mostly the case, since few sufferings have struck us entirely without our own fault. Much that is unpleasant is therefore forgotten too.

These two losses make our memory so short, and proportionately shorter as its material grows longer. Like objects on a shore from which we depart by ship, becoming ever smaller, less recognizable, and harder to distinguish, so are our past years with their experiences and actions. Moreover, memory and imagination sometimes bring a long-past scene of life before us as vividly as yesterday, so that it draws quite close. This happens because it is impossible to bring the long interval between then and now before our minds in the same way: it cannot be surveyed in a single image, and most events within it have also been forgotten. Only a general knowledge *in the abstract* remains, a mere concept, not a perception. Hence the individual event long past seems as close as yesterday, while the intervening time vanishes and the whole of life appears incomprehensibly short. Indeed, sometimes in old age the long past behind us, and with it our own age, may momentarily seem almost fabulous, chiefly because we still have before us the same abiding present. Such inward processes ultimately rest on the fact that not our being in itself, but only its appearance, lies in time, and that the present is the point of contact between object and subject.—Why, conversely, in youth does the life still before us seem immeasurably long? Because there must be room for the boundless hopes with which we people it, for whose realization Methuselah would die too young; and because we measure it by the few years already behind us, whose memory is always rich in material and therefore long, since novelty made everything appear significant, so that it was pondered afterward, often repeated in memory, and thereby impressed upon it.

Sometimes we believe we long to return to a distant *place*, while really we long only for the *time* we spent there, when we were younger and fresher. Time thus deceives us under the mask of space. If we travel there, we discover the deception.—

Given a faultless constitution as an *indispensable condition*, there are two ways to reach a great age, illustrated by two burning lamps: one burns long because, with little oil, it has a very thin wick; the other because, with a thick wick, it also has much oil. The oil is vital power; the wick its consumption in every way and manner.

Regarding *vital power*, until the thirty-sixth year we resemble people living on their interest: what is spent today is there again tomorrow. From that point on, however, our analogue is the person living on investments who begins to encroach on capital. At first the matter is quite imperceptible: most expenditure still restores itself; a slight deficit goes unnoticed. But it gradually grows and becomes noticeable; its increase itself increases daily, eating ever deeper, each today poorer than yesterday, with no hope of a halt. Thus the decline accelerates increasingly, like falling bodies, until at last nothing remains. It is a very sad case when the two things compared here, vital power and property, really are melting away together; hence love of possessions increases with age.— At first, however, until adulthood and somewhat beyond, in vital power we resemble people who add something from their interest to their capital: not only is expenditure restored of itself, but capital grows. And sometimes, through an honest guardian's care, this happens with money at the same time. O happy youth! O sorrowful age!—Nevertheless we should spare our youthful powers. Aristotle observes (*Polit. L. ult. c. 5*) that of the Olympic victors only two or three had won once as boys and then again as men, because the early exertion required by training so exhausts their powers that these are afterward lacking in manhood. As this holds for muscular power, it holds still more for nervous power, whose expressions are all intellectual achievements. Hence the *precocious talents*, the child prodigies, the fruits of hothouse education who astonish as boys, later become very ordinary minds. Even early, forced exertion in learning the ancient languages may be responsible for the later sluggishness and lack of judgment of so many learned minds.—

I have observed that almost everyone's character seems particularly suited to one age of life, so that he appears to greater advantage in it. Some are lovable youths, and then it is over; others vigorous, active men whom age robs of all worth; some appear to greatest advantage in old age, when they are gentler because more experienced and composed: this is often the case with the French. The matter must rest on character itself possessing something youthful, manly, or elderly, with which the particular age agrees or against which it acts as a corrective.

Just as, aboard a ship, we notice our progress only by the retreat and consequent shrinking of objects on shore, so we become aware of growing old and older by finding that people of ever greater years seem young to us.

We have already discussed how and why, the older we become, everything we see, do, and experience leaves fewer traces in the mind. In this sense it could be maintained that we live with full consciousness only in youth, and in old age with only half. The older we become, the less consciously we live: things hurry past without making an impression, like a work of art seen a thousand times; we do what we have to do and afterward do not know whether we have done it. As life thus becomes ever less conscious the more it hastens toward complete unconsciousness, the course of time thereby also grows ever swifter. In childhood the novelty of all objects and events brings each into consciousness; hence the day is immeasurably long. The same happens on travels, where *one* month therefore seems longer than four at home. Yet this novelty does not prevent the time that seems longer in both cases from often genuinely “dragging” in both, more than in old age or at home. Gradually, however, long familiarity with the same perceptions so polishes the intellect that everything increasingly glides over it without effect; the days thus grow ever less significant and therefore shorter: a boy’s hours are longer than an old man’s days. The time of our life accordingly moves with acceleration, like a ball rolling downhill; and just as on a rotating disk each point moves faster the farther it lies from the center, so for everyone time passes faster and ever faster in proportion to his distance from life’s beginning. We may consequently assume that, in our mind’s immediate estimate, a year’s apparent length varies inversely with the number of years in our age: if, for example, the year amounts to $\frac{1}{5}$ of our age, it seems ten times as long as when it amounts to only $\frac{1}{50}$. This difference in time’s speed has the most decisive influence on our whole mode of existence at every age. First, it makes childhood, though comprising perhaps only 15 years, the longest period of life and therefore the richest in memories; then, we are subject to boredom throughout in inverse proportion to our age. Children constantly need occupation, whether play or work; if it stops, terrible boredom seizes them at once. Youths too are still greatly subject to it and look apprehensively at unfilled

hours. In manhood boredom diminishes increasingly; to old people time is always too short, and days fly past swift as arrows. It goes without saying that I speak of human beings, not cattle grown old. Through this acceleration of time's course, boredom thus generally disappears in later years, and since the passions too fall silent with their torment, if only health has been preserved, life's burden is really lighter on the whole than in youth. Hence the period preceding the onset of weakness and the troubles of greater age is called "the best years." For our comfort they may really be so; youth, however, when everything makes an impression and enters consciousness vividly, retains the advantage of being the mind's fertile season, its budding spring. Deep truths can only be seen, not calculated: their first recognition is immediate and elicited by the impression of the moment; it can therefore occur only while this is strong, vivid, and deep. In this respect everything consequently depends on making use of youth. In later years we can act more upon others, indeed upon the world, because we ourselves are complete and finished and no longer belong to the impression; but the world acts less upon us. These years are therefore the time of doing and achieving; the earlier ones, of original apprehension and knowledge.

In youth perception predominates; in old age, thought. Hence the former is the time for poetry, the latter more for philosophy. In practice too, in youth we let ourselves be determined by what we perceive and its impression; in old age, only by thought. This rests partly on the fact that only in old age have enough perceptual cases occurred and been subsumed under concepts to give those concepts full meaning, content, and authority, while habit has moderated perception's impression. In youth, by contrast, especially in lively and imaginative minds, the impression of what is perceived, and thus of things' outward aspect, so predominates that they regard the world as a picture. Their chief concern is therefore how they figure in it and appear, rather than how they inwardly feel. This is already shown in young people's personal vanity and fondness for finery.

The greatest energy and highest tension of intellectual powers undoubtedly occur in youth, at the latest up to the thirty-fifth year; from then they diminish, though very slowly. Yet later years, even old age, are not without intellectual compensation. Experience and learning have only now become truly rich: there has been time and opportunity to view and consider things from every side, compare each with every other, and discover their points of contact and connecting links. Only now, therefore, do we truly understand them in context. Everything has grown clear. Hence even what we already knew in youth is now known far more thoroughly, because we have far more evidence for every concept. What we believed we knew in youth we really know in old age; moreover, we really know much more, and possess knowledge thought through on every side and therefore genuinely coherent, while in youth our knowledge is always incomplete and fragmentary. Only *someone who grows old* acquires a complete and adequate conception of life, surveying it in its entirety and natural course, especially not merely from the entrance, like others, but also from the exit. This particularly enables him to recognize its nothingness fully, while others remain caught in the delusion that the real thing is still to come. Youth, by contrast, has greater conception, and can therefore make more of the little it knows; old age, however, has greater judgment, penetration, and thoroughness. An exceptional mind already gathers in youth the material of his own knowledge and original fundamental views, what he is destined to give the world; but he becomes master of his material only in later years. Accordingly, great writers will generally be found to have produced their masterpieces around fifty. Yet youth remains the root of the tree of knowledge, though only its crown bears fruit. But just as every historical age, even the most wretched, considers itself much wiser than the immediately preceding one and earlier ages, so does every age of human life; both, however, often err. In the years of bodily growth, when our intellectual powers and knowledge also increase daily, today grows accustomed to looking down on yesterday with contempt. This habit takes root and persists even when intellectual decline has begun and today ought rather to look at yesterday with reverence; hence we then often undervalue both the achievements and judgments of our youthful years.

In general we should observe here that although the intellect, the head, like character or the human heart, is inborn in its fundamental qualities, it by no means remains as unchangeable as the latter. Rather, it is subject to many transformations, which in general even occur regularly, partly because it has a physical foundation and partly because it has empirical material. Thus its own power gradually grows to its peak and then gradually declines to feeble-mindedness. On the other hand, the material occupying and activating all these powers—the content of thinking and knowing, experience, information, practice, and thus perfection of insight—is a continually growing quantity until perhaps decided weakness sets in and lets everything fall. This composition of a human being from something absolutely unchangeable and something regularly changing in two opposed ways explains the differences in his appearance and standing at different ages.

In a broader sense we may also say: the first forty years of life supply the text; the following thirty supply its commentary, which first teaches us truly to understand the text's meaning and coherence, together with its moral and all its subtleties.

Toward life's end it is like the end of a masked ball, when the masks are removed. We now see who those people we encountered in our life's course really were. Characters have revealed themselves, deeds borne their fruits, achievements received their just appreciation, and all illusory images fallen apart. Time was needed for all this.—The strangest thing, however, is that only toward life's end do we really recognize and understand even ourselves, our own goal and purposes, especially in relation to the world and to others. Often, though not always, we shall have to assign ourselves a lower place than formerly imagined; sometimes, however, a higher one, because we had no adequate conception of the world's baseness and therefore set our goal higher than it. We discover, incidentally, what there is in us.—

People commonly call youth the happiest time of life, and old age the sad one. This would be true if the passions made us happy. They toss youth to and fro with little joy and much pain. They leave cool old age in peace, and at once it acquires a contemplative character: knowledge becomes free and gains the

upper hand. Since knowledge in itself is painless, consciousness becomes happier the more it predominates within it. We need only consider that all pleasure is negative in nature, pain positive, to understand that passions cannot make us happy, and that old age is not to be pitied because certain pleasures are denied it. For every pleasure is always merely the satisfaction of a need: that the pleasure falls away together with the need is no more lamentable than that someone cannot eat after a meal and must remain awake after a full night's sleep. Plato, at the beginning of the *Republic*, judges old age much more correctly to be happy insofar as it is finally free of the sexual drive that until then incessantly disturbed us. One might even maintain that the varied and endless fancies produced by the sexual drive, and the emotions arising from them, sustain a constant mild madness in human beings as long as they remain under the influence of that drive, or that devil by whom they are constantly possessed; only after its extinction would they become entirely rational. Certainly, however, in general and apart from all individual circumstances and conditions, a certain melancholy and sadness belong to youth, a certain cheerfulness to old age. The reason is simply that youth still lives under the rule, indeed in the forced service, of that demon, who scarcely grants it a free hour and is at the same time the direct or indirect author of almost every misfortune that strikes or threatens humanity. Old age, however, has the cheerfulness of someone released from a long-worn fetter and now moving freely.—On the other hand, one might say that after the sexual drive has died out, life's true kernel is consumed and only its shell remains; indeed, that it resembles a comedy begun by human beings and afterward played to its end by automatons wearing their clothes.

Be that as it may, youth is the time of unrest; old age, of repose. From this alone we might infer their respective comfort. A child stretches eager hands far out toward everything colorful and varied before him: he is stimulated by it because his sensory apparatus is still so fresh and young. The same occurs with greater energy in the youth. He too is stirred by the colorful world and its manifold forms: his imagination at once makes more of them than the world can ever bestow. Hence he is full of desire and indefinite longing, which rob him of the peace without which there is no happiness. In old age, by contrast, all this has

subsided, partly because the blood has grown cooler and the excitability of the sensory apparatus has diminished; partly because experience has clarified the worth of things and the content of pleasures, gradually freeing us from the illusions, chimeras, and prejudices that formerly obscured and distorted a free and pure view of things. We now know everything more correctly and clearly, take it for what it is, and have also attained, more or less, insight into the nothingness of all earthly things. This is precisely what gives almost every old person, even one of very ordinary abilities, a certain air of wisdom distinguishing him from the young. Above all, these things have brought about peace of mind, a great part of happiness, indeed its condition and essence. Thus while the youth thinks wondrous things are to be gained in the world if only he could discover where, the old person is permeated by Ecclesiastes's "all is vanity" and knows that all nuts are hollow, however richly gilded.

Only in later age does a person truly attain Horace's *marvel at nothing*: the immediate, sincere, firm conviction of the vanity of all things and the hollowness of all the world's glories. The chimeras have vanished. He no longer imagines that somewhere, in palace or hut, a special happiness dwells, greater than what he too essentially enjoys everywhere when free of bodily or mental pain. Great and small, distinguished and lowly by the world's measure, are no longer different for him. This gives the old person a special peace of mind in which he looks down smiling on the world's deceptions. He is completely disillusioned and knows that however one may dress up human life and drape ornaments over it, its poverty soon shines through all such fairground tinsel; however one colors and adorns it, it is essentially the same everywhere: an existence whose true worth must always be estimated only by the absence of pains, not by the presence of pleasures, much less pomp. (Hor. epist. L. I, 12, v. 1-4.) The fundamental trait of advanced age is disillusionment: the illusions that until then lent life its charm and activity its spur have vanished. We have recognized the nothingness and emptiness of all the world's glories, especially pomp, brilliance, and the appearance of grandeur; learned how little lies behind most desired things and longed-for pleasures; and thus gradually attained insight into the great

poverty and emptiness of our whole existence. Only in the seventieth year does one fully understand Ecclesiastes's first verse. Yet this is also what gives old age a certain peevish cast.—

People generally think the lot of the old is illness and boredom. The former is by no means essential to old age, especially if one is to reach a great age, for *as life increases, health and illness increase*. As for boredom, I have shown above why old age is even less exposed to it than youth. Nor is boredom at all a necessary companion of solitude, toward which old age certainly leads us for easily understood reasons; it is so only for those who have known no pleasures beyond sensual and social ones, leaving their minds unenriched and their powers undeveloped. Intellectual powers admittedly decline in advanced age too; but where there was much, enough will always remain to combat boredom. Further, as shown above, correct insight still increases through experience, knowledge, practice, and reflection; judgment grows sharper and connections clearer. In everything one gains an increasingly comprehensive view of the whole. Thus through ever-new combinations of accumulated knowledge and its occasional enrichment, one's deepest inward self-cultivation still progresses in every respect, occupying, satisfying, and rewarding the mind. All this compensates to some degree for the decline mentioned. Moreover, as I have said, time runs much faster in old age, counteracting boredom. The decline of bodily powers does little harm if they are not needed to earn a living. Poverty in old age is a great misfortune. If it is banished and health preserved, old age can be a very tolerable part of life. Comfort and security are its chief needs; hence money is loved still more in old age than earlier, because it replaces missing powers. Released by Venus, one will gladly seek some cheer with Bacchus. The need to see, travel, and learn has been replaced by the need to teach and speak. It is fortunate, however, if an old man retains love of his studies, of music and theater, and a certain receptivity to the outside world generally, as some indeed do into the latest age. What someone "possesses in himself" never benefits him more than in old age. Most people, admittedly, having always been dull, become more and more like automatons in advanced age: they always think, say, and do the same things, and no outward impression can change anything

or call forth anything new. Speaking to such old men is like writing in sand: the impression vanishes almost immediately. An old age of this kind is indeed only the *dead residue* of life.—Nature seems to wish to symbolize the onset of second childhood in great age through the third teething that then occurs in rare cases.

The fading of all powers with advancing age, more and more, is certainly very sad, yet necessary, indeed beneficial; otherwise death, for which it prepares the way, would be too hard. The greatest gain brought by reaching a very great age is therefore a gentle death: dying exceedingly easily, preceded by no illness, accompanied by no convulsion, and not felt at all. A description may be found in the second volume of my principal work, Kap. 41, S. 470 (3. Aufl. 534).—

In the Upanishad of the Veda (Vol. II, p. 53), *the natural span of life* is given as 100 years. I believe this is right, since I have observed that only those who have passed their ninetieth year partake of *a gentle death*: they die without any illness, without apoplexy, convulsions, or a death rattle, indeed sometimes without growing pale, generally sitting and after eating; or rather, they do not die at all, but merely cease to live. At every earlier age one dies only of illnesses, and thus prematurely[W].—

[W] [Variant:] In the Old Testament (Psalm 90, 10), human life is set at 70 years, or at most 80; and, more significantly, *Herodotus* (I, 32 und III, 22) says the same. Yet this is false and merely the result of a crude and superficial interpretation of daily experience. For if the natural span of life were 70–80 years, people between 70 and 80 would have to die *of old age*. But this is not the case at all: like younger people, they die of *illnesses*, and illness is essentially an abnormality, so this is not the natural end. Only between 90 and 100 do people die, then generally *of old age*, without illness, struggle, rattling breath, or convulsions, sometimes without growing pale; this is called *a gentle death*. Hence here too the *Upanishad* is right in setting the natural span of life at 100 years.

Human life cannot properly be called either long or short[X], because at bottom it is the measure by which we estimate all other lengths of time.—

[X] For however long one lives, one never possesses more than the indivisible present; memory, meanwhile, loses more daily through forgetting than it gains through additions.

The fundamental difference between youth and old age always remains that the former has life in prospect, the latter death; the former thus possesses a short past and a long future, the latter the reverse. Certainly, when old, we have only death before us; but when young, we have life before us, and the question is which of the two is more alarming, and whether life, taken as a whole, is not something better behind us than before us. Ecclesiastes (7, 2) already says: "The day of death is better than the day of birth." To desire a very long life is in any case a rash wish. For *whoever lives a long life lives through much evil*, says the Spanish proverb.—

The individual course of life is not, as astrology would have it, traced out in the planets; yet the course of human life in general is, insofar as a planet corresponds in sequence to each age, and life is thus successively ruled by all the planets.—In the tenth year *Mercury* rules. Like him, a person moves swiftly and lightly within the narrowest circle: trifles can change his mood, but he learns much and easily under the god of cunning and eloquence.—With the twentieth year begins the rule of *Venus*: love and women possess him entirely. In the thirtieth year *Mars* rules: a person is now strong, vehement, bold, warlike, and defiant.—In the fortieth year the 4 *planetoids* rule, and life accordingly broadens. He is *thrifty*, serving the useful through the power of *Ceres*; has his own hearth through *Vesta*; has learned what he needs to know through *Pallas*; and as *Juno* the mistress of the house, his wife, rules[Y].—In the fiftieth year, however, *Jupiter* rules. A person has already outlived most others and feels superior to the present generation. Still in full enjoyment of his strength, he is rich in experience and knowledge; according to his individuality and position, he has authority over all around him. Accordingly he no longer wants to be commanded, but to command. He is now best fitted to lead and rule within his sphere. Thus Jupiter culminates, and with him the fifty-year-old.—Then, in the sixtieth year, follows *Saturn*, and with him the heaviness, slowness, and tenacity of *lead*:

But old folks, many feign as they were dead;
Unwieldy, slow, heavy and pale as lead[Z],
Rom. et. Jul. A. 2 sc. 5.

[Y] The approximately 60 additional planetoids discovered since are an innovation I want nothing to do with. I therefore treat them as philosophy professors treat me: I ignore them because they do not fit my purposes.

[Z]

Many old people seem already like the dead:
Like lead, heavy, tenacious, stiff, and pale.

Last comes *Uranus*: then, as people say, one goes to heaven. I cannot include *Neptune* here—unfortunately thoughtlessness has christened him so—because I am not allowed to call him by his true name, *Eros*. Otherwise I would show how the beginning joins the end: how Eros stands in a secret connection with death, by virtue of which Orcus, or the Egyptians' Amenthes (according to Plutarch de Iside et Os. c. 29), is the taking and giving one, thus not only the taker but also the giver, and death the great *reservoir* of life. Hence, then, hence from Orcus comes everything, and everything now alive has already been there. If only we were capable of comprehending the conjuring trick by which this happens, everything would be clear.
The End.